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ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

A MERCURY PUBLICATION

ɾger! Tyger! A. H. Z. CARR
ıe Twelve-Minute Grave ROY VICKERS
ranger in the Park THOMAS WALSH
ead Man JAMES M. CAIN
ıe Bearded Golfer MICHAEL ARLEN

also S. J. PERELMAN, J. B. S. HALDANE, MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD, and others

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DETECTIVE STORIES

TYGER! TYGER!	*A. H. Z. Carr*	3
STRANGER IN THE PARK	*Thomas Walsh*	52
THE TWELVE-MINUTE GRAVE	*Roy Vickers*	98
DE CRIMINE	*Miriam Allen deFord*	115

CRIME STORIES

THE BEARDED GOLFER	*Michael Arlen*	20
TWO OF A KIND	*Laurence Kirk*	81
DEAD MAN	*James M. Cain*	128
TORRID ZONE	*Fletcher Flora*	137

INTERNATIONAL INTRIGUE

THE GOLD-MAKERS	*J. B. S. Haldane*	29
NESSELRODE TO JEOPARDY	*S. J. Perelman*	44

EQMM "FIRST"

YOU GOT TO HAVE LUCK	*S. R. Ross*	91

SERIAL STORY

TOM SAWYER, DETECTIVE: CONCLUSION	*Mark Twain*	65

MINUTE MYSTERY

THE CASE OF THE ARCTIC EXPLORERS	*Austin Ripley*	64

BOOK REVIEWS

DETECTIVE DIRECTORY	*Robert P. Mills*	96

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A. H. Z. Carr just manages to find time each year to write a single short story, and each of these yearly tales is written especially for EQMM's annual contest. Two years ago Mr. Carr won a Second Prize with "The Trail of John Nobody," one of your Editors' top-favorite short stories of the past decade; last year Mr. Carr won another Second Prize with "Murder at City Hall"; and now, for the third year in succession, a story by Mr. Carr wins a Second Prize — and how richly the story deserves it!

"Tyger! Tyger!" is the tale of a poet-detective — a daring and difficult conception despite the fact that a titanic tradition can be said to exist for just such a basic premise. For it was a poet — indeed, one of the greatest poetic geniuses in the history of literature — who not only invented the detective story but also, in real life, played the role of a detective with startling success. Yet, outside of Chesterton's experiment in THE POET AND THE LUNATICS, *no major writer in the field had ever combined ratiocination and creative poetry for purely fictional purposes. So, all praise to A. H. Z. Carr for his "Tyger! Tyger!" and its fine poetry and equally fine detection.*

And some thanks should also go to the anonymous poet who visited Mr. Carr last year and with whom Mr. Carr had some animated conversations. For it was during these talks that Mr. Carr was struck by the almost automatic way in which a poet's mind absorbed delicate impressions of things seen and heard, and later wove them into conversation on totally different subjects, without being even remotely aware of their origin. Listening to the real-life poet, it occurred to Mr. Carr that the poetic Unconscious would make an unusual repository for all the visible and invisible clues in a murder mystery. And from this nebulous concept has come one of the most imaginative and satisfying stories in last year's contest.

TYGER! TYGER!

by A. H. Z. CARR

WHEN THE TELEPHONE RANG, Malcolm Ridge did not at first answer it. The cadence of a line was coursing through his mind. *What tortured something something words, Can tell us* . . . No. He tried again, rubbing his thickly bearded chin, focusing on the elusive thought — the hopeless search of men to find language for the revelations of the great

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mystics. Keep it simple. *What torments* . . . No. Blast the telephone. His thin body squirmed on his chair and he made an angry noise in his throat. *What writhings* . . . Better.

What writhings of the written word . . .

While his right hand scribbled the line, his left groped for the insistent instrument on the desk. "Yes?" he growled.

"Mr. Ridge? This is Barry Coy."

"Who?" With repetition of the name, the impatience went out of Ridge's voice. "Hello there, Lieutenant," he said. "You haven't been to see me for a long time."

"It's good of you to say that. The fact is, I don't have a private life any more. They have transferred me to Center Street. The Narcotics Squad."

"That sounds promising," said Ridge.

"I hope so. I'm really phoning now about police business. We've got a problem, and it occurred to me that you might be able to help us. First, let me ask — you still dine at Basheff's restaurant, don't you?"

"Yes, frequently. Why?"

Coy said, "We're only a block away. I'd like to come around with Sergeant McConnell and talk to you, if you can spare the time."

"Come now," said Ridge. Curiosity worked in him, and he made no effort to bring his thoughts back to the poem. Relaxing, he found an ancient briar pipe in the pocket of his faded brown corduroy jacket, and lighted it. Basheff's. Now what? . . .

A few minutes later, he saw the two detectives turn a corner into the narrow, twisting Greenwich Village street. From his third story window they looked like twins, lean, tall, gray-suited, gray-hatted, but as they turned in at the grimy, brownstone house they glanced up, and the resemblance ended. Coy's face was round and cheerful, the other man's horse-like and melancholy. They clumped up the stairs, Ridge opened the door of his apartment to welcome them, and Coy introduced Sergeant McConnell.

"Of the Homicide Squad. We're working together right now. He tells me you're the first poet he ever met."

McConnell's long face cracked in a brief, dubious smile as he shook hands. "Sit down," invited Ridge, and offered drinks, which were accepted. He was genuinely glad to see Coy. A poetry-loving cop. The incongruity tickled him, but at the same time he found more sensitive understanding in Coy than in most literary professionals. Beneath this aspect of their friendship was another, more sombre. He could never see the detective without a tensing of his stomach muscles as he remembered the evil night three years earlier when he had staggered into a police station and told the first policeman he saw, "I have killed a man." The policeman took one look at the red-bearded, shock-haired, wild-eyed figure, with the thin, bloody, foil-like sword still in his hand, and promptly reached for his gun. His colleagues, too, were inclined

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to think Ridge a fugitive from the psycho-ward at Bellevue, especially as he could remember nothing beyond the moment when the dead youth had come up behind him and gripped his throat. His explanation that he carried a sword-stick, partly to offset a lame leg and partly for self-protection in a neighborhood abounding with young ruffians, aroused nothing but skepticism. It was his good fortune that Coy, then a precinct detective, came into the station just then and recognized the leonine head of the dazed poet.

Although he did not advertise the fact to his superiors, poetry was Coy's private passion. In his youth he had tried his hand at it, and for him Ridge was a name of magic, a legend carried over from his school days. He could not stand by and see a man whose poems he loved treated like a dangerous lunatic. That very night his work had demonstrated that Ridge, attacked by a mugger, had unmistakably killed in self-defense. He uncovered, too, something that Ridge was inclined to keep to himself — the savage neck wound, suffered in World War I, and which explained both the covering beard and the berserk rage and psychological blackout that had ensued when his neck was assaulted.

Subsequently, Coy had dropped in to bring Ridge a permit to carry the sword-stick, discreetly forgetting that Ridge had not held one before; and with this act of consideration their pleasant friendship had begun. Ridge was not unaware that Coy's good-will carried also a deep psychological significance for him — an additional absolution for the stabbing which, self-defense or no, hung like a weight on his memory.

Coy's quick blue eyes, roaming the dark room, with its simple furniture and small, distinguished paintings, were held by a photograph in vivid color torn from a magazine and pinned on the wall in front of Ridge's writing table: the vast red, white, and orange mushrooming cloud of an atomic explosion against a black sky.

"That's an unlikely picture to see here," he said.

"I put it there for mood. It helps me work up steam for the thing I'm doing." Ridge saw the unspoken question in Coy's face and chuckled in his beard. "A symbolic poem, short but important I think. I call it *The Burning Bush.*"

Coy wrinkled his forehead. "The one in the Bible that Moses saw?"

"That's it. 'Behold, the bush burned with fire and the bush was not consumed.' And God called to Moses, and said, 'Here am I.' "

"The voice of God speaking from the atomic blast?" Coy's interest was unfeigned. "Is that what you're getting at?"

"Something like that. But God does not speak directly. The poem is a seeking for enlightenment, just a series of questions, really."

"It's a tremendous idea," said Coy slowly. "I haven't yet seen a great poem about atomic energy. How are you handling it?"

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"Do you remember Blake's *Tyger! Tyger!?*"

Coy threw a covert glance at the impassive Sergeant McConnell, and then quoted:

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Framed thy fearful symmetry?

"The glorious simplicity of it," said Ridge. "That's what I want. This idea demands the same architecture."

McConnell, with the air of a man who has endured much, coughed restively, and Coy said, "Sorry, Mac. I can never resist hearing Mr. Ridge talk about his work."

Quickly Ridge said, "My apologies, Sergeant. That's not what you're here for. You mentioned Basheff, Coy. And you're dealing with narcotics now?"

"Right," said Coy. "We're after Basheff."

Ridge's heavy brows contracted over his blunt nose. "I'm sorry to hear that. Not that I ever liked the man or his wife, but they serve good food, and serve it well. Not expensive, either. I hope you don't close them."

Coy said, "McConnell here doesn't share your taste. He's been eating there the last few days, and he doesn't ever want to see beef Stroganoff again."

"Or borscht," grunted McConnell.

"Or borscht," Coy said with a grin. "But to get down to cases. A young woman was strangled down this way last week. Russian birth, a pretty brunette, name of Tania Olgin. Living alone. We learned Basheff had been keeping her. This is all between ourselves, of course. Homicide worked on it and found dope in the picture. The girl was a hop-head. So they called the Narcotics Squad into it."

McConnell cleared his throat. "Homicide," he said pointedly, "could have handled the murder, but we don't want to fool around with the dope racket."

Coy grinned, "That's it, Mac. Not crossing any lines. I'm working purely on the dope angle." He turned back to Ridge. "The arrow points to Basheff. There's always been some heroin peddled down this way, but we never had any reason to suspect him before. Not to arouse suspicion, we've just been watching quietly. I can't go into the place myself — people know me in this neighborhood — so I've had one of my men team up with Mac and eat in the place. But they haven't seen a thing to show how the dope is pushed, let alone how it comes in. We have checked on the chefs, the waiters, the bartender, everybody in the place. Not a sign of anything. We were at a dead end, when I remembered you used to be a steady customer there."

"You want me to keep an eye out?" said Ridge.

Coy hesitated before he said, "A little more than that — if you are willing."

"Oh?" Ridge chuckled. "I see. The eccentric poet, who prefers to dine alone. What more likely than I should

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need an occasional shot of some narcotic to aid my fantasies or help me forget this dreary world? Is that it?"

Coy nodded. "They know you and they might take you on faith, where they would be suspicious of a stranger. It would require a build-up, of course."

Ridge's dark eyes gleamed. "I have always yearned for the Sherlockian role. Do I use the needle?"

"No, I think not." Coy was serious. "For one thing, you don't look like an addict. For another, you wouldn't have the needle punctures on your arm. Mac and I thought it had better be reefers, marijuana. Not often, just for your wilder flights of imagination."

"There was Coleridge and his opium," said Ridge. "If I thought I could write another *Kubla Khan* I would actually try the stuff."

"You don't need it, sir. To get back to Basheff. Suppose we say the fellow who has been selling you the reefers has disappeared. Your supply is cut off. You don't know how to go about finding another source. You become depressed. You can't write. You feel desperate. Basheff might accept that, coming from you. If he's what we think he is, he may see a good customer in you. What we want is to find out how he passes the stuff out, and if possible where he gets it, and where he keeps it."

"If it was me," said McConnell glumly, "I'd tear the place apart until I found it."

"On what evidence?" said Coy. "It can't be done. Mac and I don't agree about strategy, Mr. Ridge, but we have decided to try it my way. If you are willing."

Ridge said, "I'll do it, of course. It's a vile trade, the dope peddler. You really believe Basheff is that low?"

"A moral certainty, based on what the Olgin woman said."

"What was that?"

"She got tight in a Village bar and announced that Basheff might be the smartest dope pusher in the business, but if he tried to throw her over she would show him how much she knew. The next night she was strangled by somebody who didn't leave any clues."

"Basheff?"

"According to him and Mrs. Basheff they were at home when the murder took place."

"And that's all?"

"Well, some of Basheff's customers look like addicts. The affluent sophisticated type, but they show the usual characteristics — contracted pupils, pale complexions, nervous mannerisms. They go in, they dine quickly, they hurry away. But they never talk to Basheff except when he greets them at the door; they never go to his office. We have seen nothing unusual except that they eat and drink expensively. Twice we have picked up single men a block or two after they left Basheff's. We let them know we thought they were jewel thieves, took them to the station house, and searched them carefully. Nothing. We evidently got the wrong pigeons. We

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had to let them go with apologies."

"No idea what I ought to look for, then?"

"I can tell you what not to look for. The waiters don't seem to be in on it. Nothing suspicious in the way they handle themselves, and they are all struggling along like honest men. We thought it might be Mrs. Basheff, at the cashier's desk, but she just takes the checks, hands out the change, and that's all. We haven't done any better on figuring how the stuff reaches Basheff. For a while we gave a good deal of attention to that old flower seller that hangs around there every night."

"Tante Maria? But she's quite mad," said Ridge. "Basheff once told me she was a Russian princess in the old days. She was tortured by the Bolsheviks before she escaped and was never quite right in her mind afterward. According to him, he lets her sell her flowers there for old times' sake. I have always thought it rather decent of him. She's the last person I'd think of in the dope racket."

"You're probably right," said Coy. "We have gone over her flower basket several times when she didn't know it. Just flowers. As you can see, we're not happy. That's why I'm here, violating the police tradition against calling in outsiders."

"I'm glad you came," said Ridge. "I don't like people who trade on human misery. Any further instructions?"

"Just to take no chances, and don't give the show away. McConnell and Tierney will be there, but of course they won't know you. There shouldn't be any danger."

"I'll get started tonight," said Ridge, and after Coy's expressions of gratitude the two detectives drained their glasses and stood up. When they had gone, Ridge limped around the room for a while to let his excitement wear off. At last, weary, he sat down again at his desk, and scratching his bearded chin, forced his mind back to the unfinished couplet. A second line, which had evidently been just below the threshold of consciousness all the time, immediately suggested itself:

What writhings of the written word
Can trace the truth Thy prophets heard?

Except that now he did not like *writhings*. Too high-keyed, too alliterative, giving the lines an air of artifice. He wanted a feeling of awe, of terror. Then why not say so?

What terror in the written word

Ah! That was better. But *trace the truth* was weak.

Can sound the Voice that Moses heard?

He wrote it down provisionally. At the same time, his mind was toying with a phrase that Sergeant McConnell had used. "Tear the place apart." Ridge was often stimulated by some chance remark or observation that intersected with the current of his own thought, and now lines began to grow around the words. By the time the sky had darkened he had written another stanza that struck him as be-

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ing close to the mark, although it did not wholly satisfy him.

When in the passion of our wars
We tear apart the stuff of stars
That God has wrought in space and time
How shall we expiate our crime?

The sense of guilt of every man for the tiger in him — that was what he wanted to evoke. He felt like going on while he was in the vein, but a stirring of hunger made him remember Basheff's and his promise to Coy; and he picked up his old black felt hat, and reached for his slender malacca cane.

Outside, the clear cool air of the spring night gave him a little thrill of sensory pleasure. What a fool he was to coop himself up all day! But poetry had to be composed indoors; there were too many distractions in nature. He looked up at the sky and saw that even the street lights could not conceal the stars.

The white starred beauty of the night.

Whose line was that? His own, perhaps? Too banal to use — but a cool, sweet phrase. His upturned head made him nearly miss a curb, and he stumbled, only the stick saving him from a fall. Its comforting weight in his hand made him think of the word "lead," and as he walked a new phrase flitted across his consciousness.

Can you sheathe your soul in lead?

That touched the guilt sense, again. He fell into a reverie so deep that only habit made him pause where gilt letters over curtained plate-glass announced *Basheff's Cossack Cuisine.* Basheff greeted him at the door — a short, powerful square-faced man, in the white Russian shirt and black Cossack boots that he affected during business hours — "to please the tourists," as he often explained.

"Good evening, Mr. Ridge," he said in faultless English; and Mrs. Basheff, who sat tall, blonde and tight-faced at the cashier's desk nearby also said, "Good evening, sir."

Ridge replied to them absently, as he did also to a few residents of the neighborhood who looked up from their dinners. Even the deep voices of three costumed musicians, who strummed balalaikas and sang Russian songs on a perch across the room, failed to break through to him as he went to his usual table. His first action on sitting down was to reach for his pencil and unburden his memory of the rough lines that had come to him:

Though science builds a secret tower
Safe from the atom's bursting power,
What man can sheathe his soul in lead
Against the Hiroshima dead?

The memory of human death inflicted by one's own hand — or will — what did that do to the human spirit? Who could armor himself against it? A million corpses in a ruined city — or a stabbed youngster lying on a sidewalk in a pool of blood . . . Not now. Concentrate on something else. He jerked back to full consciousness and the memory of his obligation to Coy. A big, stooped waiter with a long black mustache and dark-

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circled eyes was flicking a crum from the table with his dingy arm-napkin.

"Good evening," he said gutturally.

"Good evening, Alexis." Ridge glanced up at him. The man's gray skin contrasted painfully with the orange color of his Russian shirt.

Alexis, looking at the table cloth, said, "You wish the cocktail tonight?"

"You are not looking well, Alexis," said Ridge.

"It is nothing. The cocktail?"

"All right," Ridge said, and the waiter went across the room to the small bar, with its gleaming glasses.

The musicians were straining to put conviction into *Two Guitars* for the thousandth time. Ridge thought: what was the best way to approach Basheff on the subject of poetic inspiration — and marijuana? That was the crux of the problem. As he was revolving it in his mind, a piping, cracked voice behind him chanted, "Flower, gentleman, for the buttonhole?"

In the ten years he had been going to Basheff's, Tante Maria had never called him anything but "gentleman." Did she even recognize him? Looking at the dirty, gnarled little face with the dead eyes, he doubted it. She had learned to carry her flowers from table to table, repeat her monotonous question, take the coins that were given her, go presently to whatever bed she had, sleep a little, eat a little. No more. *Some are born to endless night.* Blake, Blake, the poet of Christian mercy. He would have understood the soul of this wizened, crazed old woman and made a Song of Innocence out of it. But he, Ridge, could not. His own compassion was thinning away, the price paid for seeking to know too many little facts and not enough big truths: the curse of the age. No, he could never be a Blake, though he borrowed a thousand rhythms and effects.

"Flower, gentleman?" Tante Maria persisted.

He looked at her basket, with its dozen fading white carnations and two or three gardenias, gleaned from what florist's stale stock? "Yes," he said, took a flower, gave her a coin. Her lips mumbled, and she went on her uncertain way to the next table. As he put the carnation aside, he saw across the restaurant the long features of Sergeant McConnell, and another, younger man — Coy's deputy no doubt — Tierney the name? Basheff was still at the door, greeting customers, indicating tables. Mechanically Ridge looked at the menu, which he knew by heart.

Alexis came back with the dry Martini, and took out his order pad. "Tonight," he said, "for the special we have Shashlik Cossack *à la flamme*, very good; also the cutlets Pojarsky."

"No, keep it simple. Some broiled chicken, a salad. I don't feel well myself, Alexis. It's a sick world."

"You are right," said Alexis, unexpectedly. "A world of evil. I wish God would send a messenger, an angel with a flaming sword, to destroy it."

All waiters tended to be pessimists, Ridge reflected: add the gloomy Rus-

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sian temperament and you had Alexis. "I never heard you say anything like that before, Alexis," he said.

"Should a waiter say everything he thinks?" Alexis went away, bent, angular, his mustache drooping, his napkin flapping, a caricature, Don Quixote of the tray.

As Ridge ate, he saw Basheff walk through the restaurant to the passage at the rear that led to the washrooms and to his office. The door closed behind him. Ridge knew that it was the proprietor's custom to wait until the place was comfortably filled and then to have his own dinner served to him alone. Once, years before, Ridge had looked into the room and had been surprised and a little impressed to see luxurious furnishings, as much for living as for business, and Basheff, seated at a table of handsome service and dining with full leisure, dignity, and ritual. At such times, supervision of the restaurant passed to Madame Basheff of the commanding eye and compressed lips. She evidently was not privileged to share her husband's evening repast. Business first.

Business first! Better get at it, thought Ridge, rising from the table, taking up his stick. His heart was beating a little faster. But what had he to lose, after all? Well, he might lose his favorite restaurant — and no light loss, in an age of tea shoppes and lunch counters. Still, it was in a good cause.

As he opened the door of the corridor, he saw Tante Maria shuffling toward him, head bowed, flower basket on her arm, her lips moving. She did not look at him. Ridge stopped at the men's washroom and dabbed water on his hands and face. As he did so, his thoughts reverted unexpectedly to the picture over his desk.

The white stars of the peaceful night
Consumed in Satan's rose-flamed light.

Where had that unhappy second line come from? The trouble with the rhymed couplet as a poetic form was its almost childish simplicity. Only the strongest images could stand being exposed to it. Ridge dried his hands, smoothed his beard, and taking a deep breath continued down the passage to Basheff's door. It was ajar, and he could see Basheff seated in solitary splendor at his dining table, talking to Alexis. An empty soup plate was before him, its red-flecked surface telling of borscht consumed. He looked up, saw Ridge at the door, and said briskly, "Come in, Mr. Ridge. You wish to see me? I am just about to order the rest of my dinner. You do not mind waiting a moment? I think, Alexis, I will have the special, but cooked to order, well-done, the way I like it."

As Alexis picked up the soiled plate and disappeared, Ridge said, "I'm sorry to disturb you at dinner, Mr. Basheff. Perhaps you would prefer me to come back later?"

"Not at all. Sit down, please. There is no hurry. They must cook my meat. I like plenty of time between courses. A glass of wine?" He indicated the bottle on his table, but Ridge, seating

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himself in a leather armchair, declined. The man did himself well: the spotless tablecloth, the shining porcelain and crystal, the silver vase with its red roses and carnations, the bottle of wine on its silver tray.

Basheff seemed to read his thoughts, for he laughed. "You think I dine better than my customers? You are right. I do. If I gave them such service they could not afford to pay and I would have no more business. But for me, it is a pleasure that I have earned. All my childhood in Russia, before the revolution, my mother was a maid in a rich man's house, and I saw through the cracks in the doors how the great world lived — with its carriages and its furs and its serfs and its mistresses and its music and its wines and its rich foods. And I said to myself, 'You, Peter Basheff, one day you too will live like that.' And now I do!"

He clenched his powerful hands with glee as he uttered the last words, and brought them down with a bang on the table, making the glasses jump. His face, Ridge observed, had a coarse strength under its fat. Basheff's small, light eyes looked at him with a quick change of expression. "But you have something to discuss with me?" he said.

Ridge said painfully, "This is embarrassing. I have come to you for help."

"Money?" said Basheff instantly. "You would like to have credit for a while, perhaps? Considering you are an old customer —"

Ridge shook his head. "Thank you, but it isn't money. I have enough for my needs — more." Did he see a flicker in Basheff's eyes? "No, this is more serious. It involves my work."

"Your work? But you are a poet. How —"

Ridge raised a hand. "Yes, a poet, but I'm getting to be an old poet. The fantastic dreams of the young — the ready images that make great poetry — I had them once. No more. Old poets need to be stimulated, Mr. Basheff."

He thought it was going well, Basheff was wholly interested, when a knock broke annoyingly into his effort. "Come in," said Basheff. The young Russian at the door, tray in hand, said, "Excuse me, boss. The gentleman at Table 17 wishes a bottle of the 1937 Beaujolais."

"The 1937, Paul? That is my best wine. Does he know how expensive it is? I do not give it to anyone who orders." Basheff rose. "Forgive me, Mr. Ridge." He went to the paneled wall of the office adjoining the restaurant, pulled back a strip of wood, and applied his eye to a small opening, meantime keeping up a steady flow of talk. "It is good for everybody," he said humorously, "to know that the boss sees what is happening even when he is in here. The customers do not know. The hole fits into the décor of the wall. But you, Mr. Ridge, you are such an old friend, I take you into my confidence." He closed the panel and walked across the room. "Yes, Paul, I have seen the gentleman before. I think we will let him have the 1937."

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Unlocking a small door in the wall, he revealed a stone vault crowded with dusty bottles lying on their sides. "You see, Mr. Ridge, the cellar in this place is no good, too hot, so I keep my choice wines here." He held up a dirt-encrusted bottle, letting Ridge read the name of the ancient chateau. "Here, Paul, take it, but be careful. It must not be shaken." The waiter put the bottle tenderly on his tray and glided out of the room.

As Basheff closed the door, he said, "Just one moment more," went again to his peep-hole and surveyed the restaurant. Ridge pushed himself up from his chair, saying, "May I look, too? I am curious to see how a restaurant looks from the owner's office."

"Of course," said Basheff, and Ridge peered through a little square of heavy glass. Only a few feet away he could see McConnell's long profile and the young tanned face of detective Tierney. Across the room, the waiter Paul was showing the bottle of wine to a well-dressed, laughing man who was wearing a red rose in his buttonhole, and gesturing across the table to his pretty young companion. Old Tante Maria was moving among the tables with her eternal flower basket, while Madame Basheff from her high desk surveyed the room with her fixed expression of settled antipathy.

"Sometimes," said Basheff, smiling, "I wish that I dared wire the tables for sound, and listen, as well as look. Then what a book I could write, yes? But I am wasting your time." He resumed his chair, motioning Ridge to sit down again. "You were saying, Mr. Ridge, that poets need to be stimulated?"

Ridge leaned forward intently. "Some writers find their dreams in alcohol, like Poe. Some get it from hashish, like Baudelaire. I am going to confide in you, Basheff. I have to confide in somebody. I have been smoking marijuana."

"No!" Basheff looked astonished.

"Not much, not often. Just to help my inventive processes," Ridge explained. "A reefer now and then. I limit myself."

"Where do you get such things?" Basheff asked.

"There was a man, I don't know his name. I met him at some Village party, years ago. He used to meet me on the corner, once a week, and pass me the cigarettes. Then without warning he disappeared. Never came back. That was three weeks ago." Ridge put a whine into his voice. "Since then I have been going crazy. Haven't been able to write. I've tried whiskey. It's no good for me — only dulls my brain. I can't work or live without something better. I've got to have it."

"Why come to me? What can I do?"

"I thought — you people in the restaurant business hear about all kinds of things. I live a secluded life. I don't know anybody else to ask. I hoped you might have heard of somebody who could help me."

"I am a law-abiding citizen, Mr. Ridge. I do not know about rackets. What you tell me is very sad. I am

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sorry for you, but I cannot help you."

Discouraged, Ridge played his last card. "Please, Basheff. If you know anybody, anybody at all, tell me. I'll pay well. I'll pay anything. Poetry is my entire life — all that I care for. And I can't create without marijuana — or something."

While he waited tensely, Basheff appeared to reflect. Presently the Russian rose and paced once up and down the room, then walked to his peep-hole and again surveyed the restaurant. At last, still without speaking, he came back slowly to where Ridge sat, and stood before him, squat, heavy, and now, Ridge saw, dangerous, tigerish.

"Mr. Ridge," said Basheff, "you may be a good poet, but you are a poor liar. You are trying to injure me — I who have been your friend. I have wondered about those two men with the Irish faces who have come here now five or six times but who obviously do not enjoy my cuisine. What is it? A racket to shake me down? And you, you my good friend — you are helping them. Perhaps you yourself are in the dope business. Perhaps this is your way of browbeating me into becoming your agent? Is that it?"

The man was almost convincing in his indignation. Ridge was furious with himself, even more than with Basheff. "I see that you will not help me," he said, and tried to rise from his chair.

Basheff pushed him back roughly. "First,' he said, "I wish to know your game. What made you come to insult me like this?" There was a silence. "Answer!" cried Basheff, and shoved Ridge heavily again.

The blow enraged Ridge, but he held himself in check. He knew that he had no chance in a fight with the younger, stronger Russian, nor did he want to compound his failure by brawling. Basheff thought that he could frighten him, force him to reveal what he knew. Well, he would find otherwise.

A timid rap at the door broke the tension.

"Yes? Who is it?" cried Basheff, still standing massively in front of Ridge.

A piping voice, bearly audible, whispered, "Tante Maria."

"Go away. I am busy. Later!" Basheff commanded. "Now, Ridge. I am serious. If you know what is good for you, speak."

Ridge hardly heard him. Revelation made him suddenly eager, confident. Tante Maria . . . *white stars consumed in rose-flamed light* . . . Just after she had passed him in the corridor — coming from Basheff's office? Red flowers that had not been in her basket before, overlaying the white. Red flowers on Basheff's table. The red rose in the buttonhole of the wine connoisseur . . .

Recklessly Ridge decided to risk a long shot.

"You find it profitable to make use of that poor old woman, I suppose? The servant boy getting even with the princess?"

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He saw Basheff's small eyes narrow, his breathing quicken. "Ridge, poet, liar! Why do you say that? What is your game? Answer me, I tell you!"

With the words, he aimed a sudden slashing blow with the side of his flat palm at Ridge's neck. That was where the German bayonet had incised a deep wound, on a bloody day at Belleau Wood, half a lifetime earlier. The shock was excruciating. Ridge made an inarticulate sound and fumbled wildly for his swordstick. Another choking blow caught him in the same spot, he uttered a thin yell of anguish, and after that the world became a black and red horror of meaningless murmur, movement, and pain.

With the partial return of consciousness, when his eyes were still closed, and before he even remembered where he was, he became dimly aware of lines of verse that he recognized as Blake's drifting across his mind.

Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?
Tyger! Tyger! burning bright . . .

Ridge heaved a huge, groaning sigh. The tiger in every man, the tiger in himself, the tiger who carried a steel blade, and killed with it. . . . Why? Why? Was he really only a coward after all, who dared not walk city streets unarmed like ordinary men? Would he never escape from the memory of the dead young body lying on the sidewalk all bloodied with wild sword-thrusts?

He forced open his eyes and brought them into focus. His neck still hurt, but no longer unendurably. Then, from his armchair, he found himself staring incredulously at Basheff, lying prone in front of him, face up, eyes unseeing. There was blood on the floor, and great red stains were still widening around three dark-rimmed punctures in the white silk shirt. And in his own hand was his sword, its bloody tip almost touching Basheff's belly; and the malacca sheath lay at the man's side.

Self-accusing words, "Murderer! Coward!" arose in him in a silent shriek. Dropping to his knees, he felt for Basheff's pulse, touched his forehead, held a glass from the neat table to his pale lips. Basheff was dead.

Ridge sank back into his chair and tried to think. Presently the timid knock he had heard before sounded on the door. "Come in," he managed to say. The door opened and the shriveled figure of Tante Maria stood there, her face revealing slow wonderment, her eyes fixed on the dead man. The scream that burst from her at last seemed too big to come from her tiny frame. Footsteps, then, and voices. . . . The young waiter, Paul, bending over the corpse, darting furious glances at Ridge. . . . Alexis, pale and inarticulate, standing like a statue in the doorway, one unsteady hand supporting a plate heaped high with meat. . . . The horse-faced McConnell, saying angrily to Tierney, "What a mess Coy has made out of this! I told him not to fool around with poets. Poets! Now look what

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we got on our hands. Get Coy over here!" . . . Mrs. Basheff, pale but controlled, urging quiet: "Please, not so much noise, and use the back entrance. We must not alarm the customers."

And at last Coy, shocked, scowling, asking to know all that Ridge could remember, saying, "I don't get it. Why the hell did you have to fight with him? This is the same thing as last time — only who is going to believe it?"

Ridge could not answer. The room had taken on a flickering, nightmare quality, in which little sounds became enormously significant, and little movements were seen as in a slow-motion horror film. The Homicide man deliberately writing in his notebook. Alexis, picking up a napkin from the table and flicking off an imaginary crumb. Mrs. Basheff, belatedly succumbing to emotion, sobbing in a chair. Tante Maria, murmuring Russian prayers, motionless against the wall.

A disconsolate Coy was explaining over the telephone: "But, Inspector, all I asked Ridge to do was to try to get a line on. . . . Yes, I guess he must be. . . . I'm not trying to shift any blame. . . . We're waiting for the Medic. . . . Yes, sir, I'll do my best."

Ridge felt sorry for Coy. And he could help him; that at least he could do. Forcing himself to speak calmly, he said in a low voice, "Lieutenant, I saw something. Tante Maria had only white flowers earlier this evening. Later she came from here and there were red flowers in her basket. And Basheff had red flowers on his table."

Coy stared, wheeled to take the flower basket from the mumbling old woman, and bent over it, examining the blossoms petal by petal, stem by stem. Then he shook his head. "Nothing," he said bitterly. "We've been through this before. Nothing."

In the same calm, almost sleepy voice, Ridge said, "I think the flower was only a sign. The customer identified himself by buying the right flower from Tante Maria — a red rose. She never knew."

"That still doesn't get us anywhere," said Coy.

McConnell interrupted, "Let's get this crowd out of here before the boys arrive."

Coy was watching Ridge. "Wait a second, Mac. Let's hear the rest of it."

Ridge concentrated, almost happy as the picture unfolded under his words. "Suppose the customer had to complete the identification by ordering the right thing from the waiter? The right vintage of a fine wine? The wines that Basheff kept in this room?"

Mrs. Basheff had stopped weeping and was listening closely. He knew now that he was on the right track. The key to the wine vault was on Basheff's desk. "Look for the 1937 Beaujolais, in the lowest bin at the right," Ridge said. With these words Mrs. Basheff was at the door, trying to run, stopped by Tierney.

Ridge said nothing more: he was

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feeling something like admiration for Basheff's scheme. Almost foolproof. The wines in their nailed and wired cases shipped from France, probably neither so choice nor so venerable as the labels pretended, the thick dirt helping to conceal the heroin from official eyes. The customers known to Basheff, their good faith proved. The "choice" wine would go only to customers who knew the right vintage year for that night — so easily conveyed by Basheff as he greeted familiar faces at the door. And he would take no chances on the wrong man ordering the chosen wine by accident; the customer had first to prove himself by buying a red rose from Tante Maria. Even the waiters would not understand; only the Basheffs. Somewhere on the bottle, the customer who knew where to search would find the little pellet of heroin — as Coy was finding it now, squeezed into the inevitable hollow at the base of the wine bottle, and coated over, so that no one who lacked the secret would find it. Casually handling the bottle, the customer could easily reach up a finger, dislodge the pellet, and pocket it unsuspected. Quickly then he would finish his meal, without a murmur pay to Mrs. Basheff the steep price charged on his check for the wine — plus what private remittances to her husband? No wonder Basheff could afford to do himself well, serve such good food to his customers at such modest prices. He must have felt very safe. That was what Mrs. Basheff was screaming now to Coy: "He said he would never be caught! It was that girl! I warned him. That girl!"

Tania? Yes, that was the name. It was true, her death had opened the gate for Basheff's disaster. Had he killed her? The tiger in him had been blood-thirsty, those large dead hands could have strangled. . . . But there was no proof of that . . . as there was proof of his own, Ridge's, guilt.

Guilt. The most dreadful of all words. Guilt! A vein in his temple began to throb, beating out a trochaic rhythm.

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright.

Why did he keep thinking of that? He had no time to wonder. The room was suddenly full of hatted, efficient men, examining the corpse, taking flashlight photographs, asking questions. One detective took his fingerprints, compared them with others from the cane handle of the sword. "They're his, all right. All neat and tidy," the man said.

Coy, much more cheerful than before, tried to give comfort. "I'm more grateful than I can tell you, Mr. Ridge. You cracked this wide open. I don't think they'll make much trouble over your killing that rat. You can't help it if a whack on your neck affects you that way. I can't see anything worse than a short jail sentence in it, or maybe a sanitarium for a while."

Ridge shivered. How could Coy know he did not fear the trouble the

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police might make for him so much as the trouble that was already in him? Another death, by his hand: that he could not bear.

Coy helped him to his feet, to make more room for the Medical Examiner, a grim, bored man who said, "First wound was in the diaphragm. Tell by the blood. Fatal in itself, probably, but the others made sure. All struck from the front, of course."

McConnell scratched his head. "No sign of a struggle. It must have taken him by surprise. Basheff must just have stood there, not believing Ridge would stab him."

Ridge leaned against the neat table, thinking that condemned men were entitled to a last meal — but not Basheff. The open wine bottle. The plate with its now cold and greasy chunks of lamb, each with a little hole in it. The lamb. On the other side of the table stood Alexis, pulling at his long mustache. Their eyes met and held in a long stare, and Ridge murmured, "Shashlik Cossack à la flamme."

Alexis's glance fell quickly, as Coy said, "What was that, Mr. Ridge?"

Alexis, looking sad and ill. Alexis, sick of the world.

"Alexis," said Ridge, "did you love her so much?"

No reply; only a momentary flicker of the waiter's eyelids.

"Was she your daughter?" Ridge asked gently. "Your sister?"

Still Alexis said nothing, and the room became silent. Everyone, even the impatient McConnell, sensed the new tension and they turned to hear.

The unconscious mind, thought Ridge, marveling. The tiger, burning bright. Shashlik Cossack, served on the long flaming skewer. Would a man of ritual like Basheff, wanting only the best of food and service for himself, let his shashlik be brought to him in any other way?

"Alexis," Ridge said, "why did you use this table napkin to clean away a crumb? Where is that stained arm-cloth you always carry? And where is the skewer that made the holes in those pieces of lamb?"

Did He who made the Lamb make thee, Alexis, tiger? He felt a sudden surge of pity for the man: they were brothers. One had killed in self-defense, the other in revenge — what matter? Both were tigers, burning bright in the forest.

Can I see another's woe,
And not be in sorrow, too?

Coy and McConnell had taken it up, now, were slowly extracting the truth out of questions and silences, questions and reluctant responses. Alexis, entering the office, the flaming skewer of lamb in one hand, the hot plate on the tray in the other, to find Basheff irritably standing over the unconscious poet. The poet could wait. Dinner first. Serve it then, Alexis. Serve it to the man you hate, the man who debauched your loved one, the man you think murdered her. Did you see yourself then as the angel with the flaming sword, sent to destroy evil? The plate on the table

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— so. The sharp point of the skewer down, the meat pressed slowly off the point, gently, carefully.

You hate him, Alexis. He sits there, with his big belly, so used to the scene that it never occurs to him that you too hold a sword in your hand, even if it is only the skewer of an order of shashlik. And the next instant, before even you realize what has happened, it is plunged deep into him, and he falls down, and you strike again, and once again to be sure. Each time the blow is deep, the blood comes gushing, and each time the grease of the lamb leaves a dark little rim on the tear in the white shirt. But then, after the rage is spent, comes the dark fear, the primeval sense of guilt. I too know that feeling, Alexis. In your fear your eye catches the glint of my sword-stick where it has fallen, the blade a little exposed after I had unfastened it. And you take the sword, and you touch it to the dead man's blood, and put the handle in my fingers. Have you seen gangster movies? Do you remember to leave no fingerprints? Now you wipe the bloody skewer clean on your arm napkin, and hide it under your coat; and you set the table in order, and take away the plate of lamb so none will know you have been here. How could you guess that my numb brain would blindly gather in and hold the unconscious impressions of the flaming skewer and the smell of the lamb, and embody them in Blake's verses?

Then you run away quickly to hide the cloth and the skewer. But you do not dare dispose of the lamb, Alexis, for the chef would wonder if you asked for another portion for the boss; and you must have the order with you when you return to the room, so no one will suspect that you have already been there. Somewhere you put the lamb aside — perhaps on a steam table in the busy kitchen to keep it warm until the body is discovered and you are ready to serve it again.

Where is the deadly skewer, Alexis, where the red-stained cloth? You are breaking down, confessing, telling them where to look, brother tiger. Now they will take you away to be punished, punished in your way, as I am punished in mine, as everyone must be punished for the evil men do, one to another.

Rubbing his chin, Ridge hardly heard Coy's relieved voice. "Well, that's over! You're quite a detective, Mr. Ridge. I don't know how you got it, but thank heaven, you put us on the track. We can't afford to have detectives in jail, let alone poets."

He stopped when he saw that Ridge's thoughts were elsewhere. Pencil in hand, the poet had begun to jot down some verses that had just formed in his mind:

Is this Your messenger, oh Lord —
The angel with the flaming sword?
Is this the meaning of the sign —
That men as brothers must combine
Or perish in the deadly fire?
Is this —

but he could not just then find words for the rest of the line.

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THE BEARDED GOLFER

by MICHAEL ARLEN

THEY TELL THIS STORY IN LONDON about William Henry Boisregis, who is dead.

The late William Henry Boisregis was a popular actor and a great actor. But he did not paint his face. He was a politician.

The Rt. Hon. W. H. Boisregis, P.C., was wealthy, gifted, and handsome. Above all, he was possessed of the arts of popularity in uncommon abundance. Peerless as a bootlicker, he was charming with his equals, while subordinates and dogs were devoted to him. Even his wife, who had been married to him for twenty-five years, could not deny him his charm. But she disapproved of him.

It should be understood that Mrs. Boisregis disapproved of her celebrated husband on moral grounds. She was alone in this. Her friends considered that she should take the long-sighted view about such purely localized trifles, for W. H.'s Imperial morality was above reproach.

It was of Boisregis that Mr. Winston Churchill, in words which would not have been disclaimed by his noble father nor could be bettered by his distinguished son, is reported to have said: "Lesser statesmen, who permit themselves the corrupt indulgence of thinking in so-called liberal terms on this great subject (*i.e.* India), would serve their country better by following the Right Honorable gentleman's example, for he would rather not think at all than not think Imperially."

Mrs. Boisregis, however, continued to disapprove on moral grounds. She was old-fashioned, and people said she would look her best dressed in leather, with a nice feather in her hat. It is true that she has since married a Bishop.

The fact is that W. H. Boisregis was susceptible to the charms of pretty women. He liked the girls, and the girls liked him. But, as people said, what of it? Was he a great Englishman? Was he a good fellow?

It can be said that William Henry Boisregis was, whenever his party held office, which was always immediately after or before a major crisis in the history of England, the most popular Minister in the country. This popularity reached its pinnacle during the Italo-Abyssinian crisis when, at a great meeting at the Albert Hall in defense of the rights of such small nations as had not already been swallowed whole by England, W. H. Boisregis took the liberty of telling Mr. Mussolini to go to hell. This advice was received unfavorably in Italy, where for some years past the newspapers had accustomed the great Italian people to thinking that downright rudeness in international affairs

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was the monopoly of a great modern power but quite out of place when used by such an effete civilization as England. Mr. Mussolini himself, when the statement was repeated to him by the well-known comedian Signor Gayda, is reported to have laughed lightly. The incident closed with a mutual exchange of courtesies, and/or vice versa.

It was shortly after this that W. H. Boisregis committed suicide in peculiar circumstances.

He had no enemies, he was not in financial difficulties, he was powerful, he was loved. The inquest was barren of satisfactory explanations. It was painful to be forced to the conclusion that the great W. H. Boisregis must have been out of his mind, for some reason or reasons unknown.

Color was lent to this theory by the fact that when the statesman's body was found at the foot of the railway embankment where he had thrown himself from a passing train, he was wearing a well-trimmed and firmly-fixed false beard. It should be added that the deceased already had in his own right a gray moustache of the distinguished curly sort.

The False Beard Sensation will be remembered as having caused much heated comment of a mixed and largely thoughtless character. The newspapers were unanimous in considering the wearing of a false beard by an eminent statesman to be mysterious, while people in general were inclined to take the view that, in spite of the bag of golf clubs found near his body, W. H. Boisregis had chosen to commit suicide in an un-English way.

Such suspicions, however, were at once put to rest when it became known that Mrs. Boisregis had explained to the police that her husband would often don a false beard on Saturdays with a view to improving his golf. For he had found that while playing golf as Boisregis, the Cabinet Minister, he was apt to be nervous and self-conscious. He sliced. But by donning a beard, and thereby altering his appearance, he had found he could improve his game by at least eight strokes. This was probably a lie, but W. H. was a really keen golfer.

Mrs. Boisregis explained that for some months before the tragedy her husband had enjoyed nothing more than a round on some out-of-the-way course where his hairy disguise permitted him to make a reasonable score in the company of strangers.

Now, some months after the tragedy the widow made a peculiar remark to a friend. It should be explained that Mrs. B. was thinking of getting married again to the Bishop of Margate, who was curiously enough also a golfer, but without the beard, of course. In point of fact, she is now Mrs. Margot.

Well, on being asked by a friend how she could so quickly have forgotten the great W. H., she replied to the effect that forgetting him was as easy as pie since she had been married for twenty-five years to a man without a face. It appeared that W. H.

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had no private but only a public face. He came alive only when acting, pretending, or lying — that is, when he was being the Good Fellow whom everybody liked so much.

When asked whether W. H. Boisregis had ever, out of long custom, come to believe in his own pretenses and lies, his widow said she had never found out, but she supposed he very probably had, seeing what a successful politician he was.

Now, a certain Mrs. Anthony de Rhodes Jones, so the story goes, could have told Mrs. Boisregis something of interest. But she did not come forward, not even at the inquest. There was a reason for this. She did not want people to think she was nuts.

Mrs. A. de R. Jones was the daughter of a Vice-Admiral, and she had married the son of a Rear-Admiral. The sort of thing must have happened before and will no doubt happen again, probably with the most satisfactory results. Mr. A. de R. Jones (who wore sidewhiskers, incidentally) was not, however, a very easy man to live with, for he was a perfect martyr to bankruptcy, an affliction which he tried vainly to appease with copious applications of brandy between meals. This corrupted his natural juices, so that his manners were increasingly unlike those of an English gentleman.

At the time when this peculiar and horrible experience befell Mrs. A. de R. Jones she was, in partnership with the daughter of a Major-General, running a modest hat shop in a quiet street off Knightsbridge.

Immediately after luncheon one Saturday, Mrs. Jones took train for Leicestershire, where she was to spend the weekend with friends. Relieved to find that she was alone in her first-class carriage — for though poor she still clung to certain naval habits — she prepared herself to pass a pleasant afternoon reading a book in which a financier and a manicurist had already been murdered, but nobody knew why or by whom. Mrs. Jones was not to be distracted from finding out by the entrance of a stranger at a suburban station, apart from vaguely wondering why, since there were plenty of empty firsts, he had chosen hers.

This stranger was a tall and handsome man of perhaps fifty, whose pointed beard did not make him disagreeable to eyes accustomed to more exposed faces. But all faces were equally unpleasant to Mrs. Jones until she had found out about the stabbed financier and the strangled manicurist, whose clothes had been found in a state of Gallic disarray leading Scotland Yard to suppose that she had preferred dishonor to death but had rather unfairly let herself in for both.

The bearded stranger, throwing his bag of golf clubs — a large hooded leather one of great antiquity — onto the rack, sat down in the corner facing Mrs. Jones. Feeling that he was looking at her, she went on reading. When she did happen to glance up,

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she found him beaming at her. Unutterably revolted, she went on reading. To be beamed at by bearded strangers while in the middle of a thriller was really too much.

"Murder story?" said the stranger.

Mrs. Jones went on reading.

"Poor stuff," said the stranger. "I've read several. Poor stuff."

Mrs. Jones went on reading.

"If you will tell me the name of the one you are reading," said the stranger, "I can probably tell you the end, then you won't have to read any more. What is it called?"

Mrs. A. de R. Jones looked up with the eyes of a Vice-Admiral, not retired.

"*How to Grow Asparagus*," she said bitterly.

"In England?" said the stranger. "Good title, that — breathes suspense — action."

"May I go on reading while you smoke?" said Mrs. Jones.

"I don't smoke," said the stranger.

Mrs. Jones went on reading. It had now been established that the stabbed financier had for some years past kept a mistress in a luxurious flat in Blackpool, if such a thing is possible.

"Permit me to tell you," said the bearded stranger, "that I can interest you a great deal more than that stupid murder story you are reading."

"Trying to read," said Mrs. Jones bitterly.

"Perhaps you should wear spectacles," said the stranger politely.

"It is my ears, sir, that are bothering me at this moment."

"Yes, these trains are altogether too noisy. But we were speaking of murderers, madam. They are not usually men of high intelligence. Their own mistakes enmesh them. Now I shall tell you, if you will permit me, how an intelligent man could commit a murder and never even be suspected. Have I your attention?"

Mrs. A. de R. Jones closed her book with a snap and looked steadily at the bearded stranger. Then she smiled. He was so obviously amiable, with twinkling blue-gray eyes. He was so obviously a man of authority who was accustomed to being liked. His well-trimmed graying beard suited him, too. She wondered who he was and decided he might be a Harley Street specialist who enjoyed playing the fool in an amiable way.

"Very well," sighed Mrs. Jones.

"Your servant, madam," said the bearded stranger. "Now let me begin my story by supposing that we imagine someone quite well-known — a famous writer — a sporting peer — a great doctor or statesman — someone in the public eye. A man in such a position, recognized wherever he goes, has naturally to be careful."

"Why?" said Mrs. Jones.

"Why?" smiled the stranger. "Suppose the poor devil occasionally wants to amuse himself. Suppose he likes a bit of fun. I am not asking you to imagine a fish, madam, but a man. In the case of a fish, of course, this story would not arise. Now let us suppose this famous man has an

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. . . May I ask, madam, if you are married?"

"Yes, thank you," said Mrs. Jones.

"Splendid. Then this man has — or had — an entanglement. But he is a man who respects his wife and considers her happiness. For nothing in the world would he belittle his wife by being seen in public places with another and a younger and a prettier woman. Above all, he has his public position to consider. But he cannot help having his little weaknesses.

"Bearing this in mind, the steps such a man would take to insure discretion for his peccadillos must follow naturally. Let us suppose he has taken a young lady under his protection, for reasons which convention frowns upon but are not really unnatural. Nor should we hastily suppose that he had any baser motives in forming this illicit connection than a desire for the conversation of a fresh young mind.

"He installs this fresh young mind in a small house not far from central London and sees her not more than once a week — sometimes only every other Saturday. Restraint, madam, restraint is an essential part of the equipment with which this man has attained great success in his profession, whatever that may be.

"But I see I have forgotten to make clear the most important point of all: the fresh young mind does not know the real name of her protector and does not dream of his eminence in the great world.

"You will say that is improbable, for a man so eminent must be recognized by his photographs in the public prints. Madam, on his occasional visits to this young lady he wore a beard — similar, perhaps, to mine, but with this difference, that his was false. The best wig-maker in London had made his beard, and it took him more than an hour on these Saturday mornings dedicated to a fresh young mind to arrange it so that there should be no possibility of detection.

"I shall not strain your credulity by saying he could do this comfortably without the knowledge of his wife and the connivance of his valet. Indeed, nothing in their married life — which I regret to tell you had its disagreeable moments — had ever amused this lady more than this eccentricity of her husband's: of donning a false beard on occasional Saturday mornings so that he could play golf on some country links in the pleasant obscurity of his disguise.

"She was not to know, of course, that the bearded husband who left her on Saturday morning with his bag of clubs was in fact on his way to a small house in an outlying northern suburb, where he would spend the day: and that it was only occasionally that, after luncheon in this discreet little house, he would for the sake of appearances take a train from this outlying suburb and play golf on some course not too far away.

"I see you are surprised that I have not as yet said anything of murder. But naturally the question of murder did not arise until one day the young

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lady happened to discover the real name and eminence of her bearded protector.

"Our friend found to his consternation that she was very annoyed at having been duped. We shall no longer describe hers as a fresh young mind. But that was not all. Presently her annoyance took the practical form of blackmailing him for considerable sums of money. Our eminent gentleman was wealthy, but had many responsibilities. Nor, one supposes, did his wife's extreme respectability take the form of sparing expenditure either on her house or her person, the former being tastefully arranged.

"Thus the day came when he realized that the young lady must be put out of the way. He came to this conclusion with great reluctance but realized its inevitability. He also realized that he must have had some such thought at the back of his mind from the moment when she had discovered his identity, for he had continued to visit her with his now useless beard.

"Now I want to add a detail which may or may not make my narrative seem realistic to you. What finally decided him to murder her was the fact that on the very day she had discovered his identity and started being disagreeable about it she had also bought or been given a small white cat.

"Now our eminent friend, who was devoted to dogs, not only detested cats as cats but he detested this particular cat doubly and trebly. For, though white, it gradually became a symbol of the young lady's inner nature. And it was such a vicious little beast.

"With all his plans perfected, he arrived at the little house one Saturday morning as usual. She kept only one servant, but by long arrangement this servant would leave early every Saturday morning for her mother's house and return only on Sunday morning.

"Our eminent friend was compelled, much to his regret, to have luncheon alone that Saturday. But this was unavoidable, for the young lady, who had been treated with a touch of chloroform, was lying not uncomfortably on the kitchen floor with her head in the gas oven. His luncheon therefore had perforce to be of the order known as a cold snack.

"But he would have minded this less if throughout his meal the small white cat had not sat in a corner of the little sitting-room, eyeing him with cold disapproval which now reminded him of his wife and now of the deceased in her most disagreeable moods. Finally, making such friendly noises as occurred to him, he approached the cat with a view to kicking her out of his sight. But she saved him the trouble by slipping out of the room, after which he did not see her again.

"He had come prepared with a letter written on notepaper identical to that which she habitually used and in

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her handwriting, which was far from difficult to imitate. This letter briefly, and let us hope touchingly, explained that she was committing suicide out of loneliness.

"Leaving it on the table in the sitting-room, he wiped away his fingerprints and, taking up his bag of clubs, left the house by the back door, for this was not overlooked by the neighboring houses.

"But as he walked to the station he did not much care whether or not it was known that the young lady had had a bearded visitor occasionally. For one thing he did not think the police would inquire very deeply into so commonplace a suicide. For another, he was unrecognizable in his disguise — only his wife and valet knew he wore a beard — and even if they ever heard of an obscure suicide in an outlying suburb it was beyond all probability that they would ever connect it with him."

The bearded stranger beamed.

"Now suppose, madam, this man had been me — getting into this half-empty train just as I did at a suburban station, obviously on my way to play golf. Tonight I should go home — or our eminent friend would go home — first removing his beard, according to his usual practice, at some station waiting-room. And there, madam, you have an intelligent murder."

"He might be found out," said Mrs. Jones, "if the police went tooth-and-nail after the young lady's bearded visitor."

"I gave the matter careful thought, madam — while making up the story. I fancy it would be impossible to trace the affair back to our eminent friend."

"Then there's one other point," said Mrs. Jones faintly. "You ought to have killed the cat too."

The bearded stranger's blue-gray eyes twinkled at her. But Mrs. Jones's attention was riveted on the rack above his head. The red eyes of a small white cat were staring unblinkingly at her from behind the bag of golf clubs.

Following her eyes he looked up at the rack above his head, but from where he sat could see nothing untoward. He turned again to Mrs. Jones, his eyes amiably interested in her agitation.

"What is it, madam? You look as though you were seeing a ghost."

Mrs. Jones was praying for strength not to faint. Could she pull the communication cord before the murderer leaped at her? Or should she make a dash for the corridor in the hope that there was someone in the next carriage?

The bearded stranger rose with great deliberation. She gave a faint sob and tried to stretch her arm up to the communication cord, but was somehow paralyzed by his amiable look of inquiry. Far from attacking her, he turned his back and looked at the rack above his head. The cat had now climbed onto the golf bag.

"You little beast," said the bearded stranger quite amiably. "Climbed into my golf bag, did you? I'll teach

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you to climb into my golf bag and spoil my stories."

He turned to Mrs. Jones, who was now quite certain that she was about to faint.

"Madam, may I ask your permission to throw this cat out of the window?"

He made a vicious grab at the cat, but she spat at him and leaped to the other end of the rack. He laughed, and looked ruefully over his shoulder at Mrs. Jones. Then he lifted his golf bag from the rack and, holding it under his arm, stood looking down at her, while she shrank as far as she could into her corner.

But he appeared to have no intention whatsoever of attacking her. The last expression she could remember on his handsome face was one of amiable but sorrowful regret that a woman could be such a fool as to be upset by trifles.

She must have closed her eyes in her terror. But she heard his voice quite distinctly.

"I see you are eager to pull the communication cord, madam. That would be embarrassing for a man in my position. Why not pretend later that you were alone in this carriage?"

She was at the mercy of a maniac. Her eyes closed, she waited in agony for the first touch of his hands. She must have lost consciousness. But a sudden wild rush of air brought her to her senses. The door of the carriage was banging to and fro. She was alone. Her terror must have given her strength, for within the instant she managed to bang the door to. Then she sat back in her corner, panting, her hands pressed against her breasts.

What was she to do? If she pulled the communication cord she would be the chief witness in a sordid murder case. Also, who would believe her? And there would be no question of bringing the murderer to justice, for no man could have taken that jump and lived.

She opened her eyes and saw the white cat staring at her from the opposite end of the compartment. Mrs. Jones wanted to be sick. She was about to rise in search of the lavatory when the corridor door was filled by a large female with a Roman nose. She looked at Mrs. Jones disdainfully, then round the compartment, and, more in sorrow than in anger, said: "Amelia!"

The white cat immediately leaped onto the large lady's shoulder, whereupon she stroked it, caressing its head with her lips. She looked severely at Mrs. Jones.

"Don't you think you might have told me that Amelia was in here? She must have got out of my compartment while I was dozing."

"But," said Mrs. Jones with a shiver, "is that *your* cat?"

The large lady with the Roman nose, disdaining to answer the stupid questions of pretty little nincompoops, sniffed and marched away down the corridor with Amelia purring on her shoulder.

Next day the Sunday newspapers were full of the suicide of the Rt.

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Hon. William Henry Boisregis. It appeared that no one had seen him throw himself from the train. Mrs. Jones had not told the friends in Leicestershire with whom she was staying her weird experience. In fact, she had pleaded a headache and gone to bed. She said nothing later. It was too idiotic, too fantastic. It didn't make sense. How could the great W. H. Boisregis be a murderer? And what about the large lady's cat? The poor man must suddenly have gone mad, and that was all there could be to it. Mrs. Jones did not want everyone to suppose she was mad, too.

All the same, on Monday morning she read the newspapers carefully. And mad she really thought she must be going when she read a paragraph to the effect that on Sunday morning the domestic of a Miss Lucy Watson, who had lived a solitary life in a North London suburb, had found her mistress dead of gas-poisoning in the kitchen. It appeared that the police, while not at all suspicious of foul play, were anxious to question a bearded man who was said to have been an occasional visitor at the house, though the domestic could not describe him since the bearded man always came on a Saturday, which was her day off. It also appeared that the domestic's attention to the locked kitchen door had been instantly drawn by the pathetic mewing of Miss Watson's cat, which had been locked outside.

Mrs. Jones feverishly bought several newspapers. Not one gave any particulars about the cat.

Was William Henry Boisregis a murderer? But how could he be when he had committed suicide merely because of somebody else's cat? Or was he merely a majestic liar — one of whose involved lies had suddenly *seemed* to him to have come true and thus unbalanced his reason?

Mrs. A. de R. Jones could not put the matter out of her mind. She could not sleep for perplexity. At last, she went to the length of getting into touch with the late Miss Watson's maid, and thus established the fact that the cat was a small white one with an unusually nasty disposition. She was called Amelia.

It is curious to note that when in due course Mrs. Jones was certified as a harmless lunatic, her symptoms mainly took the form of suddenly supposing herself, usually in the most public places, to be a strangled manicurist with disarranged clothes.

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Once upon a time, when you thought of spy-and-international-intrigue yarns, your mind leaped instantly to the work of such writers as William LeQueux and E. Phillips Oppenheim. But things are different now. As always happens whenever a type of writing is dominated by artificiality, there comes the dawn of naturalism — a swing to realism of motive and action and to credibility of characterization and dialogue. Perhaps the first important book of our own time to pave the way to full naturalism was John Buchan's THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS; *and in more recent years Eric Ambler, Graham Greene, and Manning Coles have lifted the prodigious-secret-and-escape-from-peril story to such heights that the London "Sunday Times," in a review of a book by Eric Ambler, stated categorically that "in accomplished hands, the 'thriller,' as much as the detective story, can rank with the best fiction of any type."*

Now, Eric Ambler's first book did not appear until 1936. But three years before that, one of England's most distinguished scientists wrote a tale of international intrigue which might be said to have anticipated, in its own subtle and satirical way, the whole Ambler-Greene-Coles school. The story was called "The Gold-Makers" and its famous scientist-author is none other than J. B. S. Haldane, biologist, physiologist, and geneticist. It is not altogether surprising that Mr. Haldane should have given the world a "scientific thriller"; he once wrote that in his opinion "a scientist, if he can do so, should help render science intelligible to ordinary people," and that he had always done his best to do just that.

So, now join Mr. Haldane in his account of a manhunt and of a secret that would have made the hunted man the "richest person on the planet."

THE GOLD-MAKERS

by J. B. S. HALDANE

I AM MORE SHAMELESS THAN MY colleagues about some things. I don't believe I know French better than most of them. But I don't mind talking it at a great rate without too meticulous a regard for genders. So every now and then I take a perfectly good holiday by giving a course of lectures in alleged French in Paris. Everyone is pleased by this arrangement. My university feels it is doing something for international coopera-

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tion, I manage to tell my French colleagues some things they don't know, and I learn any number of things I don't know myself. It's no good going to Germany, because the Germans read everything that is printed, anywhere, and publish all they have done, and a bit more, at immense length. The French remain beautifully oblivious to a lot of work done outside France until everyone says French science is going to the dogs. Then it turns out that some perfectly obscure Frenchman or woman has just discovered something really original and unlikely, such as radioactivity, or wave mechanics, which makes Einstein seem as simple as Rule of Three, and incidentally landed Eugène Galois in Devil's Island, and me (I sincerely hope) in the local jail at Ambert.

I shouldn't have put in all this preface if I was publishing this narrative in the *Chemical Gazette* or the *British Journal of Physics*, as I originally thought of doing. But readers of this story might wonder what I was doing in the Rue Cujas at 11 P. M. on June 28, 1930, and why the man with no front teeth should have known who I am, and that I actually understand something about the application of wave mechanics to chemistry. The streets round the Sorbonne are placarded with lecture announcements, and my portrait had appeared in *L'Illustration* with a highly misleading biography. On the date in question I had just delivered my sixth and last lecture, and subsequently consumed a considerable quantity of very light beer with some French colleagues at the Café Soufflet, which is at the corner of the Boulevard St.-Michel and the Rue des Écoles. I had sat there with my eminently respectable colleague Henriot and his wife, while one of his most brilliant pupils played backgammon at a neighboring table with a little lady whose calling was not in doubt. I had reflected on the improbability of such a scene at Oxford or Cambridge, yet remembered a not utterly dissimilar occasion at the Cosmopolitan Club off Leith Walk in Edinburgh. But the Professor's wife had not been there.

The man with no front teeth was remarkably shabbily dressed, and looked hungry, which is unusual in Paris, where there is work for almost everybody today. He sidled up to me, and in a voice which was not rendered more intelligible by the absence of his teeth, said, "For the love of Science read this, and if you want more, follow me."

He slunk on ahead of me and waited in the shadow of a doorway while I stood under a lamp and looked at the paper he had given me. It was the first part of the wave equation for carbon, or, rather, of the set of 42 simultaneous differential equations which would enable one to predict the behavior of that element if one could solve them. But it was expressed in a notation new to me, and certainly unpublished. Now a beggar or a tout for some unsavory concern might conceivably have copied out some of Kultchagin's equations to act as ground-bait for

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me, but he could not possibly have transposed them like that. Imagine a man handing you a copy of *The Shropshire Lad* translated faultlessly into Icelandic, and then written out in Egyptian hieroglyphics, and you get an idea of the intellectual effort involved and the special knowledge needed. This was something really queer, and I am a student of the really queer in physical chemistry, but do not despise it when I meet it elsewhere. I followed him. "Bar du Progrès, Porte de la Villette, minuit," he whispered. He was obviously in very considerable terror, and motioned me to go on.

I had an hour before midnight. I felt that I might be in for something odd, and after making sure that I was not followed, I went into the Café d'Harcourt and over a coffee wrote a note to my friend Bertaux, giving him the facts and asking him to ring me up at my hotel at noon next day, and to inform the police if I were missing. Then I boarded the Metro for the Porte de la Villette, an exit from Paris which, so far, was only known to me by its proximity on the map to the municipal slaughterhouse. I was not as calm as I could have wished, for as I entered the train I found that I had just lit a three-penny cigar in oblivion of the fact that there are no smoking compartments on the Metro, a fact which I have always resented most keenly.

The Bar du Progrès is dim, but not really sinister. It is extremely like some thousands of other bars. There is the same fat lady behind the same zinc counter, the same surprising variety of bottles behind her, the same rather consumptive-looking waiter. At the back there is a table in a recess, with two chairs. One occupant of the table can be seen from the door. The other is screened.

I went in just before midnight, ordered a café cognac, and sat down facing the door. The only other customer was an inoffensive-looking truck-driver who was describing in considerable detail a collision in which he had, of course, been the innocent party, but which had detained him beyond his usual bedtime. On the stroke of midnight my friend of the Rue Cujas came in and without a word sat down in the seat opposite me. I ordered him another café cognac, and repeated at suitable intervals during the next hour. I observed that the missing teeth were only one effect of what must have been a thoroughly nasty wound in the face. But the scars were old; it looked like a war wound. He spoke in a low voice for the best part of an hour in rapid and not easily intelligible French. At critical places in the story, he put in certain key words in English. Once or twice he made a scientific point in German. He was obviously suffering from extreme terror, but it was not the terror of the raw recruit during his first heavy shelling. It was the much grimmer emotion of the old soldier who realizes that there is a definite limit to human endurance. This is roughly what he told me. I don't think my

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recollection contains any serious errors on matters of fact.

"You have heard what happened to Eugéne Galois?"

"I know he was found guilty of murder and sent to Devil's Island. But I can't believe he murdered a colleague for money. He's as big a mathematician as his namesake was a century ago. He might have committed a *crime passionnel.* Anyone with guts might do that. But you can't murder for gain unless your mind is obsessed by money, and his mind was too full of loxodromic groups to leave room for that sort of obsession. I hear they're trying to get his case retried. If I can do anything in reason to help, I will."

"I'm glad you feel that way about Galois," said my neighbor, "but it's too late. He died last month of parrot disease. The convicts were allowed to keep pets, and there was an epidemic. He was a martyr. I am only talking to you because he is dead. He was on to the biggest thing since the invention of the steam-engine. He was murdered because he knew too much. If you listen to me, you may make world-history and possibly become the richest person on the planet. But you are also likely to be murdered. Indeed, if you have been seen with me you probably will be. But if you're afraid, you'd better clear out."

I don't mind admitting that I was afraid. But since November 11, 1918, my adventures had been intellectual and emotional only. Moreover, I am ambitious.

"Go on," I said, and he continued.

"Galois was a man of genius. But you don't perhaps realize how broad his interests were. He felt very deeply that the evils of the present day were due to the application of science by unscientific men. 'We have given humanity a large degree of control over matter, and they have given us modern war and modern industry,' he used to say. So he determined to apply his science according to his own ideas, not those of financiers. He had a special down on financiers. He realized that wave mechanics meant a new era in chemistry. When he heard that Eucken and Bonhöfer had proved hydrogen to be a mixture he said it was only the beginning. He had some private means, and after his last published paper he went off to the country and worked out the wave equations for the gold atom. You will realize the stupendous nature of that. A man with the mathematical ability to do it could have determined the orbit of the new planet Pluto in one evening in a café with the band playing. He bought a cottage in the country and had the walls papered white. He went round the different rooms with a step-ladder, covering the paper with calculations. Of course he filled masses of notebooks, too. But he said he needed the walls for the main results, and by writing them up there he could find what he wanted.

"He worked eight hours a day for a year and a half, and at the end of that time he had his principal results in a single notebook. I have seen it, but

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you will soon hear why I haven't got it. In another half-year he had worked out that gold must have an enormous and quite unsuspected affinity for a certain group of organic compounds. Then he got hold of Riquier, an organic chemist who had been with him at the École Normale, and Riquier made one of the compounds in question. They showed that their scheme would work on a laboratory scale. Then they approached me.

"My name is Martin. That is irrelevant. I do not think that I shall live long. I was a chemist at Nanterre and a friend of Riquier's. We went down together to Ste.-Leocadie, a little village on the seacoast, in Bouches du Rhône, near Aigues Mortes, where there is a large lagoon. We started a salt-pan. I don't know that the salt was particularly good, but we managed to sell it, anyway. That, however, wasn't what we were after. You know there is gold in sea water. Not very much, about one part in 20,000,000. When you evaporate the water in a salt-pan, most of the salt crystallizes out, and you are left with a sticky solution full of Epsom salts and whatnot. Almost all the gold is in there, so it is easy to concentrate it 100 times in the sunlight of southern France. You can crystallize out most of the rest of the salts without losing much gold. The brine left behind has about one part in 200,000 of gold. That's a lot. Gravel with only one part in 1,000,000 has been worked profitably, and even on the Rand the quartz only averages twelve parts in 1,000,000 of gold.

"You take your residual solution and add about eight parts in 1,000,000 of Riquier's compound, which we called auron. I don't know what it is, but it is bright blue, and it is made from a saponine, and I believe has two pyrrole rings in its molecule. You leave the mixture for an hour, and then bubble air through it. The blue stuff has combined with the gold to make a red compound. This is a surface-active substance, and it all comes into the froth which you blow off the top. You dry the froth, add a little acid, and out comes the gold. You can use the blue stuff again, but we used to lose about 5 per cent at each operation.

"My job was to run the bubbling tanks. Riquier made the stuff, and Galois saw to sales and purchases. There were some local men, chosen for their stupidity, who looked after the salt-pans, and I acted as foreman there. We started in January 1929, but it wasn't till May that we got the process working perfectly, and from May to September we got out about 4,000,000 francs' worth of gold — £30,000, or a little more. Most of that went in paying off our debts, but we had at least 1,000,000 francs clear profit. Of course, before the show started, we had decided what to do with the money. We were all somewhat idealistic. You have to be idealistic to go in for science in France today, when a professor gets £300 a year or so as the reward of a distinguished career. Our immediate idea was to go straight ahead until we had

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1,000,000,000 francs, and then start endowing science as it ought to be endowed, so that a good scientific worker was paid as well as a good engineer or surgeon, and a reasonable amount was available for apparatus. Naturally, we thought most of France, Belgium, and Italy, where scientific workers are worst paid. But we hadn't forgotten Germany, and we had a few schemes even for England and America. Well, that's all over! If you succeed where we failed, be certain that you don't forget French science."

"I'm not likely to," I said.

"We reckoned to make some 100,000,000 of francs without exciting much notice, but obviously the thing couldn't go on indefinitely. But here Galois had his plans. He believed that the world was not producing gold quickly enough. If humanity increases its stock of gold more slowly than its other material wealth, prices will fall and you will get unemployment. That is what is happening now. If we made gold too quickly — say, 30,000,000,000 francs a year — prices would rise, and all the world would be like France and Germany after the war. Galois's idea was to produce gold just fast enough to keep prices steady on an average. 'The thing will be too big for any one man,' said Galois, 'and if I gave it to the French government the country would be flooded with gold, and our agriculture and manufacturers would die like those of Spain did after the conquest of Mexico and Peru. No, we'll give France enough to pay her foreign debts, but the secret, and the control of the thing, must go to the League of Nations, and the day they get it America and the Soviets will join up.'

"Well, everything went swimmingly till the end of last August. Then I got a typewritten document from Paris. There was no address, but it was headed *Association Internationale pour la Défense des Interêrs Rentiers*. It ran roughly like this:

> Dear Sir — As it is possible that in future the operations on which you are engaged will incommode us, I have the honor to offer you an income of 200,000 francs per year should you abandon them. Your colleagues have also been approached. In the event of your resigning your occupation, you will receive your first quarter's salary within one week, the notes being dispatched to your mother's house. In earnest of our good intentions we enclose 10,000 francs.
>
> Should the offer not be accepted within one week from today, we shall be compelled to take steps to eliminate the concern in which you are a partner.
>
> A.I.D.I.R.

"I was impressed by the 10,000 francs, but still more by the fact that when I looked at the letter three days later the paper had crumbled to powder. As a chemist I can imagine how this might be done, but it would take some working out. For that showed that our enemies had skill and

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knowledge behind them, as well as money. The fact that they had destroyed this evidence meant that there was probably something in their threats.

"I talked it over with my colleagues. They had had similar letters. Unfortunately, they were against warning the police, as they didn't want to give away what we were doing. Galois thought the A.I.D.I.R. might be what it purported to be, a representative of a financial group interested in fixed-interest-bearing securities, which would of course fall in value if we flooded the world with gold, while ordinary shares and equities would rise. Riquier and I, rightly as it turned out, believed that they really stood for a gold-mining group.

"I never found out how they discovered our secret. Galois and I used to take our gold by car to a bank at Cette. Someone connected with that may have got suspicious and tracked us. Possibly Riquier may have talked too much to a lady who I think was his mistress. But I doubt it.

"Next week I was rung up on the telephone. The voice said, 'A.I.D.I.R. speaking. Our offer is and remains open. We are even prepared to raise it if you state your terms in the advertisement column of the *Petit Nimois*. If you do not accept, you will all be killed. This is our last communication.'

"I found later that the call had been made at a public phone booth in Nimes. We agreed to take no notice, but started a scheme of defenses. We all had automatic pistols, and Riquier made us a supply of lachrymatory-gas bombs. The factory was easily defensible, and we had burglar alarms, and a couple of fairly excitable dogs. The other two were enthusiasts, and I am not much afraid of death. As you see, my face got fairly smashed up in the war."

He lifted his rather long and dirty hair, and I noticed that besides the damage to his mouth, he had no left ear.

"At that time I had some false teeth, which I have just pawned in order to live. But I have been in constant pain since 1916, so I do not find life immensely attractive, even when I am not being hunted.

"Toward the end of September I developed a boil on my neck, and had to go into a clinic for two days to have it lanced. While I was away, the blow fell. Riquier was found shot outside the factory door. Two Swiss tourists swore that they had seen Galois shoot him after a quarrel. The bullets fitted a pistol which a Marseilles gunsmith swore Galois had bought from him, and which was found near the body. Several other witnesses turned up later, and swore to the most incredible lies, which hung together to make a pretty damning story. Almost simultaneously, an alleged Chilian millionaire called Fernandez sued Galois for 6,000,000 which he claimed to have lent him for a scheme for extracting gold from sea water. Apparently he had a large file of forged documents. As you know, the jury found that

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Galois was a swindler and a murderer. I got hold of his lawyer, and offered to give evidence, but he thought it would be useless, and I lay low. But the A.I.D.I.R. people found me. As I was coming home one night I was attacked by three men. I didn't want to shoot and get jailed, as I probably would have been. I managed to burst a lachrymatory bomb among them, and left them weeping. But I have been on the run ever since. Meanwhile, Fernandez was able to seize the factory for debt, and presumably got our documents and about a kilogram of auron.

"Even after his condemnation Galois's lawyer believed in him. He found out some odd facts. He established that both Fernandez and one of the supposed Swiss were connected with the same gold-mining group."

That was the end of our conversation, because at this point I noticed a bomb coming toward me through the air. Up until that moment I had refused to decide between two alternatives — that M. Martin's story was true or that he was a very good liar. I had a strong suspicion that he would shortly ask me to lend him a hundred francs. I felt that I had had my money's worth, and proposed to lend him 150, for good lying is a rare gift which should be encouraged.

The bomb, however, convinced me that he had been speaking the truth. But its immediate effect was to jerk me back thirteen years into the past. It was very unfortunate indeed for the throwers of this bomb that hand grenades had been my special line during the Great War. I am one of the few people who ran a bombing school for nine months without casualties. Among the things which we occasionally did as demonstrations was to catch lighted bombs and throw them back, or more accurately, sideways, out of the trench. I had a one-eyed and rarely sober corporal who used to do this, but I sometimes did it myself. I admit that we used to lengthen the time-fuse beforehand. Provided you are a good judge of time, it is no more dangerous than crossing the road among motor traffic, but it is more impressive to onlookers. Some idiot asked questions about it in Parliament, and got an Army Order issued forbidding the practice.

This bomb was a "stick bomb" with a long wooden handle. I think it was a German type with a five-seconds time fuse. Looking past the bomb through the door of the café, I saw two men in a car, one at the wheel, and one who had clearly just thrown it. The car was moving slowly. I reckoned that the charge would explode in another three seconds. As the bomb, which was thrown with a very good aim, landed in my coffee-cup, I caught it by the handle, and ran toward the door, swinging it as I did so. The man standing in the car was expecting me to run out, so he fired at me. But he was not expecting me to return the bomb, so he fired erratically. One bullet went through my raincoat. Another, as I afterward learned hit the lady behind the

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counter, but not fatally. As I reached the door, I pitched the bomb neatly into the car, which was now accelerating, and threw myself flat on my face with more speed than elegance, as I had been accustomed to do when a machine-gun opened fire on me.

The bomb burst as I reached the ground. The man with the revolver was jumping from the car as it did so. A piece wounded him, and he fell on the pavement. The driver could not escape, and the explosion lifted him into the air. His body, oddly twisted, fell back into the car as it struck a lamp-post and burst into flames. I got up and ran past the blazing car. As I passed the man on the pavement, I kicked his head as hard as I could. Some bone in it broke with a crack. I ran my fastest down a side street, dodged round several corners, and was violently sick. The burning car lit up the sky behind me as I walked with deliberate slowness to the Rue de Flanders. I saw no sign of Martin, and nobody followed me. I was fortunate enough to catch, within a very few minutes, an omnibus going to the Châlelet, one of those which run at hourly intervals throughout the night. I got off just before the terminus, and walked to my hotel by a roundabout route.

I am fairly sure that I was not followed, for on several occasions I turned corners when no one was in sight. I reflected for a short time on my adventures, and on the fact that I had not paid for the coffee. I regretted this, for I am rather scrupulous in small matters. I also hoped that I had killed the man on the pavement, or at least given him severe enough concussion to blot out his memory of recent events. In that case there would probably be no one who had seen me with Martin, and I stood a chance of becoming the modern equivalent of Midas. Meanwhile, however, there was nothing to be done, and rather unexpectedly I fell asleep within half an hour of getting to bed.

I did not wake up next morning until about ten. I came to the conclusion that I had better clear out for England at once. As soon as I had dressed I telephoned to Bertaux that I was all right, but had to leave Paris. I told him to keep his mouth shut and to lunch with me at one o'clock. I then took a bus to my bank in the Place de la Concorde, and drew out 2000 francs for my hotel bill and railway ticket. There had been no account of last night's little affair in the morning paper, but when I left the bank I bought a *Paris-Midi*, which devoted a column to the outrage of the Bar du Progrès. The man in the car was dead, although a baker had burned his hands badly in an attempt to rescue him. Another man, presumably the one with the revolver, was in the hospital with a wound in the shoulder and a fractured jaw. So was the proprietress. The waiter had seen me throwing a bomb, but apparently no one had seen the bomb coming in! Fortunately, he gave a very vague description of me, and had overheard

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Martin and me talking in German, but not in English. He also said that I spoke French with a German accent, in which he was not so far out. Being a Scotsman, I do not talk it with an English accent.

I went to the Gare du Nord for a ticket, and for a reservation on the four-o'clock train. As I left the station I noticed a man with a black mustache in a bowler hat, looking at me rather intently. I got into a taxi and ordered the driver to go to the restaurant where Bertaux was expecting me. I gave the directions in a fairly low voice, so I hardly think the watcher could have overheard me. He got into another taxi, and I noticed it following us. I did not wish to involve Bertaux in my little troubles. I also wanted to be perfectly sure that I was being followed, and, if possible, to shake the man off. So instead of going to my restaurant near the Sorbonne, I told the driver to go to the Gare du Luxembourg.

I can just remember the time when the London Metropolitan was worked by steam-engines. Those who regret those romantic days are advised to travel by the Chemin de Fer de Sceaux et Limours, a suburban railway line which starts from the Gare du Luxembourg and leaves Paris by an extremely long tunnel which is always full of a particularly suffocating smoke. I bought a ticket for Massy-Verrières, an undistinguished station on that undistinguished line. My pursuer followed me. I went down and got into the fullest compartment I could find. He got in close behind me. At the first stop, the Gare de Port Royal, still in Paris, I dashed out through the smoke and up the stairs. My unknown friend followed. But here I had a stroke of luck. Just outside the station there was one — and only one — taxi. I boarded it and told the man to go to the Institut Pasteur. I crouched to offer as small a target as possible, in case my unknown friend opened fire. Fortunately he did not. As we turned the first corner I looked back and saw him running after me. I do not know when he finally lost sight of me, but, as I went down to the Metro station in the Boulevard Pasteur, to which I had diverted my vehicle, I saw a taxi driving up at a rather dangerous speed.

Four different lines, however, leave that station, and if he was still chasing me, he must have taken the wrong train.

After several changes on the Metro, I arrived rather late at my restaurant. Bertaux had nearly finished lunch. I told him I was being followed by would-be murderers, and was going to run for it. As I refused to take his advice and go to the police, I think that he suspected my pursuer of being an irate husband. That is the worst of these romantics. I had no intention of going back to my hotel, for if my identity was known the hotel might be watched. I asked Bertaux to go for a small suitcase which I had already packed with my more essential clothes and shaving things. He was to

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say I would call for my trunk later. I had just finished lunch when he came back. I determined to run in the opposite direction from England, in the hope that my enemies were only watching the west-bound trains, so I went straight to the Gare de l'Est and bought a ticket for Berne, hoping to work round from there to one of the German airports and fly home.

Even as I bought my ticket I noticed, or seemed to notice, a man who looked at me closely and then went to a telephone box. I did not see him again after this, and my journey was uneventful as far as Belfort. But in the *Soir*, which I had bought, I found two interesting items. The man with the broken jaw had given his name. It was presumably false, but this meant that he could speak. On the same page was a not uncommon headline, *Un Inconnu se suicide — Suicide of Unknown Man*. The man in question, who had been found hanged from the scaffolding of a suburban cinema under construction, had no left ear, and his front teeth were missing. Nothing was found on his person but a crude scrawl stating that he was fed up.

So they had got Martin.

Possibly they had forced my name out of him before his murder. In any event, I proposed to escape his fate.

It was night when I got to Belfort. As the train ran into the station I saw on the platform my friend who had chased me earlier in the day, with two other men. Presumably he at least had flown to Belfort.

I may well have done him an injustice, but the events of the past twenty hours had somewhat prejudiced me against him, and, although I was not certain whether he intended to murder me or merely to hand me over to the police on a charge of bombing his friends, I did not feel called upon to put his intentions to an experimental test. I am sure he had not seen me when I rapidly left the compartment, and before the train had drawn up, bolted myself into a lavatory, where I remained. I had taken my handbag, as there was still a chance that my name was not known to my hunters.

Five minutes after leaving Belfort I had some luck. If I had not, I should not be alive and writing this account. The train drew up, as I had hoped it would, and clearly not in a station, as there were no lights. I dashed out of my retreat, opened a door, and jumped out of the train on the left-hand side. As I did so, the train began to move. Someone fired two or three shots at me. They missed, presumably because the train was moving and I was already fifteen yards away. Then a train going toward Paris, for which we had no doubt been waiting, cut in between me and the gunman. I did not stop running, and soon reached a road, where my luck still held. A truck was waiting at a level crossing for the trains to pass. I asked for, and got, a lift. It appeared that the truck was going from Strasbourg to Lons-le-Saunier, with the household effects of a sub-prefect. For 100 francs the

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driver was willing to take me to Besançon, where he was stopping for the night. I suspected that I might be chased, so I took him into my confidence, or more accurately, halfway in. Having received a sound classical education, I remembered Odysseus, and the advantage of economy of truth when in tight corners. I judged the driver to be romantic in the worst sense of the word. Sailors, it is said, have a wife in every port, but ports are confined to seacoasts and large rivers and canals, whereas trucks can visit any town in a civilized country. Truck drivers of a polygamous disposition are thus peculiarly favored by their professional duties.

I therefore informed him that I had formed a romantic attachment for the *poule* of a millionaire, and persuaded her to flee to Switzerland. The irate lover had pursued me while I was attempting to join her, and had tried to have me murdered in the train. As it was likely that he, or one of his myrmidons, would chase me in a car, I desired to hide among the furniture of the sub-prefect. Another 50 francs secured me a place on the top of a bale of carpets under a table, the tarpaulin was drawn over me, and we started off. I had sufficient experience of truck-jumping in the Great War to guess that I had not chosen a bed of roses. And this was a particularly ancient truck. By bracing my arms and legs against the table-top I managed, on the whole, to avoid hitting the underside of the table when the truck kicked its tail into the air; but the strain was considerable, and I was already aching, and had hit the table once, when the truck stopped with a jerk and an explosion of language.

The French tongue is peculiarly ill adapted for abuse. Theological invective is useless among a nation who are now mostly rationalists and even in their religious days had a sneaking regard for the devil. And anatomical and physiological terms which horrify the Anglo-Saxon do not shock the Latin. So the special vocabulary of abuse is largely confined to the monosyllable which Marshal Cambronne used at Waterloo. This word circulated freely while my savior denied having seen me, much less given me a lift. He even applied the monosyllable to an offer of 50 francs to look under the tarpaulin. He also mentioned the police. I heard the voices of two other men in discussion, and drew out my only weapon, a large penknife, not so much in the hope of saving my life, as on the principle enunciated by Macbeth, that, "Whiles I see lives, the gashes do better upon them." I am a Scotsman, like Macbeth. I proposed to close with one of my assailants and aim at his jugular vein, for the bullets from a small-bore automatic pistol, though quite efficient killers, have little immediate stopping power. The discussion continued, the details being inaudible. Finally my savior produced his last verbal card. "*Tristes individus*," he began a sentence, but before he had finished it I heard the noise of a large car accelerating. They had thought better of it. After all, one cannot hold

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up all the recalcitrant truck drivers of a Department at the pistol's point.

At this moment I made the bravest decision of my life. I refused an offer to come out from my hiding place. The next two hours were the most unpleasant I have ever passed, and I have been through three bombardments and had one septic wound. When we arrived at Besançon I was bruised all over, and bleeding in a number of places. As the truck-driver stood me a stiff cognac, for which he insisted on paying, he informed me that the men in the car had passed him again on their way back to Belfort, and looked at him closely. So I had saved my life.

I lost no time about my next step. With their clearly efficient organization, I assumed that the A.I.D.I.R. would discover my identity in a day or so, if they did not know it already. I wrote to a friend in London (for obvious reasons I do not mention his name) to say that I desired the story to appear in the Press that I had disappeared suddenly from Paris, leaving my luggage behind. I also wrote a letter dated from Munich to my cousin Polly, better known as Meg o' Mayfair, the lady who meets a duchess a day in the gossip columns of the *Daily Excess*. I told her that I was feeling very rundown after my lectures, and had been so absent-minded as to leave most of my luggage in Paris. I was going off for a walking tour in the Böhmer Wald, and hoped to see her when I returned in a month or two. I did not feel that Polly would be able to avoid contributing the gist of this note to the news columns. Another letter from the same address to my Parisian landlady stated that I would return to call for my luggage and pay my bill, although I guessed that the A.I.D.I.R. would probably do both on my behalf. I enclosed these letters to a friend who was working at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, with an urgent request to post them, burn the covering letter, and keep quiet.

I reckoned that although the A.I.D.I.R. would probably not take this too seriously, they would be bound to divert a little energy to Germany, and if they failed to find me within a fortnight or so, they might begin to transfer their energies across the frontier. Meanwhile, I slept, although it was clear from the state of the sheets that the spot on which I laid my head had supported many boots in the past.

In the gray dawn my truck-driver chauffeur woke me. I suppressed a desire to see Goya's *Scenes of Cannibalism* in the local picture-gallery, though this would have accorded well with my mood, and continued my journey. I again refused to sit outside, but this time I was packed more scientifically and rattled rather little. By request, the truck halted on a deserted part of the road near Poligny, about thirty miles on. I kept up my romance, and said that I proposed to walk to the Swiss frontier, and cross by the Col de St. Georges, a good day's walk up through the Jura. But my plans were different. I walked in the opposite direction, making for the

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center of France by the back roads.

As I walked I tried to consider my situation as a purely intellectual problem. The A.I.D.I.R. probably believe that Martin knew how to make auron, and had told me the secret. But, in any case, I know enough to make it worth their while to murder me. If the bomb had been thrown five minutes later I should be in a better position to judge whether they intend to flood the world with gold, or merely to suppress the secret and guard their profits. I suspect the latter, for they would not be likely to keep the secret for long. So long as they believe that by murdering me they can hush the thing up, they will try to do so. I am therefore taking what I think to be the safest, though not the noblest, course. I am publishing all I know on the subject of gold extraction from sea water. Until publication they will try to murder me. But I hope that my account will appear simultaneously in England and the United States in magazines which generally contain fiction. Many of their readers may suppose this story to be fiction. But if I am murdered, or imprisoned on a false charge, like Galois, this will constitute an advertisement to the whole world that I have written the truth.

Even the A.I.D.I.R. cannot comb out the whole of France for me, though they may possibly put the French police on my track. But they are doubtless watching the French frontiers, the British ports, and my university. They may even contrive to open letters to my friends, but they will hardly suspect me of publishing the most practically important discovery of the century in popular magazines. I am writing this manuscript in a little walled town in Auvergne, where I arrived a week after the rather hectic day which I have here chronicled. On the way I have done my best to sink my identity. I have removed all names and marks from my clothes, burned my passport, and exchanged my suitcase for a knapsack. I have even gone so far as to remove the buttons from my clothes, and substitute French buttons. Sewing is not one of my accomplishments, and not only did I prick my fingers, but several of my buttons are insecure. My beard is growing nicely. In fact, I think of wearing one permanently in future. Also, I got ten francs for my razor. In Clermont-Ferrand I bought a French-Danish dictionary. As soon as the manuscript is accepted for publication, I am asking the firm who will act as my agents to put an advertisement in the *Petit Parisien* on three consecutive days, giving the date when the news will be published. The advertisement will be a request to the creditors of a mythical American, lately deceased, to write to a lawyer (also I hope mythical) in Baltimore, before a certain date. I, and I alone, shall know that that date is the date of publication, and until then I must conceal my identity. I shall wander about France as long as my money lasts, and even try to earn a little more. I got five francs yesterday for assisting

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a motorist, whose engine had broken down, to carry a suitcase to the nearest village. I dare not write to England for money, as this would give my address away if letters to my acquaintances are opened. Also, it might be difficult to get a letter here without producing evidence of my identity.

I am living as cheaply as I can, but my expenses are much increased by the law of the land. In England anyone may sleep in the open, provided he has a shilling on his person to rebut the charge of being without visible means of support. But in France, to quote Anatole France from memory, "The law with majestic impartiality forbids the rich, no less than the poor, to sleep in ditches or under haystacks." That is the worst of Equality. Unless I can get a job, my money will run out in a month at most. Shortly before it is all spent, I propose to seek the shelter of the only available free lodging — namely, prison. I may, of course, be run in anywhere for having no identity papers, but my plan is to go to Ambert, get drunk, and be arrested. I shall then say that I am a native of Iceland, and have lost my passport. The local Danish vice-consul will presumably appear. I worked for three months in Copenhagen at the Institute of Theoretical Physics, and know enough Danish to be fairly rude, and a smattering of the modern Icelandic dialect. Besides, I am spending two hours a day with my dictionary. So I am going to be Mr. Thorgrim Magnusson, an ardent Icelandic home-ruler, who objects to all Danish officials as representatives of a foreign domination. I hope that I shall be so unpleasant that the Danes will refuse to accept me, and the French will keep me in jail. I do not particularly relish the idea of hard labor in a French prison, but it is preferable to the fate of Galois, Riquier, and Martin.

The moment my story is published, I appeal to my friends and relations to take all possible steps to get me released. I shall also give my real name. But if no prisoner of the name of Thorgrim Magnusson is to be found in the jails of Auvergne, it may be presumed that I have met the same fate as Martin. Only yesterday I saw an individual who appeared to be following me. I went up the nearest hill and outdistanced him. But I cannot believe that the A.I.D.I.R. have agents everywhere, and I suspect he was merely struck by my rather unkempt appearance. I believe that I am safe.

What will happen after this story is published I do not know. I do not propose to emulate Galois and shall not try to make gold. I will not even take holidays at the seaside. Obviously, if I knew the formula for auron and intended to work the process, I should not have given away half the secret. I shall certainly be watched, but I credit the A.I.D.I.R. with sufficient intelligence not to assassinate me. They will hope that this story will be taken as the ingenious attempt of a professor to explain his otherwise discreditable arrest for drunkenness. I take it, however, that someone will

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have the wits to see that it is a perfectly true story, and that Galois's process will be working somewhere within the next ten years.

A team of fairly good mathematicians could do the requisite calculations in four years or so.

So about six years hence I recommend my readers to sell out shares in gold mines and fixed-interest-bearing securities, and to buy industrials. But there are some very good mathematical physicists in Russia, and if they get hold of the process first, there will be about £1,000,000,000 per year available for their purposes.

In that case the purchase of securities of any kind will be pointless.

Now that you have read a genuine thriller of the 1930s, suppose we take a look at the 1950s' model; but this time, for contrast, let us view the adventure-spy-intrigue story through the eyes of one of America's top humorists, who is perhaps the finest parodist of his generation — S. J. Perelman, more familiarly known as "a Perelman of great price." In this burlesque-satire, you will collide with Destiny, Fate, Kismet — call the "unpredictable jade" what you will; you will meet that "elegant assassin, Colonel Firdausi, of the Turkish secret police" — or a reasonable facsimile; you will chase your quarry through a maze of waterfront obstacles, hurtle across the rooftops of the Left Bank — and face death, trussed in a burlap sack.

But really there is only one word for Mr. Perelman's mélange of hollandaise sauce, Nesselrode pudding, pousse-café, shish kebab, and halvah — and that word is delicious.

"Are you the man to share a desperate adventure?"

Done and done!

NESSELRODE TO JEOPARDY

by S. J. PERELMAN

CITY CRACKS DOWN ON RESTAURANTS IN HOLLANDAISE SAUCE CLEAN-UP

"The sauce is loaded with dynamite when carelessly prepared," a Health Department spokesman declared yesterday. "It has become one of our worst headaches. . . ."

Many temperamental chefs, it was learned, resent the Health Department's infringement on their culinary art. One chef, for exam-

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ple, refused to tell an inspector how he made the sauce because it was a "secret technique" that he had learned in France.

Several weeks later, five persons contracted food poisoning at the restaurant because of the hollandaise. The Health Department then demanded to know the chef's secret and found that his technique consisted of straining the sauce through a cheesecloth bag that must be squeezed out with the hands.

— *The Times.*

WHENEVER I TURN OVER THE whole grotesque affair in my mind, trying to rationalize the baffling complex of events that overtook me on the French Riviera this autumn, I always ask myself the same questions. What would have happened if Destiny, unpredictable jade, had drawn my laggard feet to some hotel other than the Villa Heliotrope? What if Anglo-Saxon shyness had sealed Colin Rentschler's lips and he had not impulsively come to the aid of a fellow-American in hazard? Would I ever have met that elegant assassin, Colonel Firdausi, of the Turkish secret police, or cowered in the hold of a rusty Greek steamer bound for the Piraeus, or given chase at midnight to a music-hall juggler over the roofs of Montparnasse? In short, why should I, timid recluse, have been wantonly singled out for a supporting role in a nightmare as fantastic as the riddle of the cheesecloth bag, a problem to shame the wildest conceits of an Eric Ambler or a Carol Reed? And why — except that it is highly traditional — do I ask these questions all over again when I should be getting on with my story?

To begin at the beginning, I'd been down at Fez, in North Africa, all summer, working on a book of favorite recipes of famous people like Tennessee Williams, Paul Bowles, Truman Capote, and Speed Lamkin, and my nerves were at sixes and sevens. I felt completely drained, used up; I'd pretty well exhausted my emotional bank balance doing the necessary research, and I knew it was touch and go unless I immured myself in some quiet pied-à-terre where I could slough off superficialities and organize my material. I shan't burden you with tedious autobiographical details, but perhaps I ought to explain that my people (poor bourgeois dears) left me a goodish bit of money. Praise be to Allah — and the automobile wax my father invented — I don't have to fret excessively about the sordid aspects of life, and hence I've applied myself to living graciously, which I do think is all that matters, really. I mean I sometimes wonder if a properly chilled Gibson or a superb *coq au vin* isn't basically more important than these grubby wars and revolutions everyone's being so hopelessly neurotic about. Not that money's actually vital to my existence, mind you; one art I've mastered is how to make do with the absolute minimum.

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Given fair seats at the ballet, half a dozen friends with country houses from whom I can scrounge weekends, a few custom-tailored suits, some decent hand-lasted shoes — it's weakness, I know, but I'm fixated on good leather — and three months a year at Montreux or Bordighera, and I can live in a hole in the wall at the Crillon and rub along on a gigot and a crisp salad.

Anyhow, I'd finally fetched up at the Villa Heliotrope, a modest little establishment on the Estérel coast west of Cannes, and everything was proving utterly ideal. The cuisine wasn't too repugnant, and if *Madame la Patronne* occasionally used overmuch musk on her embonpoint, she at least rationed it in her seasoning. Well, one evening I came in to dinner with a truly pagan appetite. (Ardent sun-worshipper that I am, I'd spent the entire day on the *plage*, baking a glorious golden brown.) I had just dispatched Madame's creditable *rôti* and was attacking the dessert when the chap at the next table cleared his throat.

"Easy does it," he said abruptly. "I wouldn't bolt that Nesselrode if I were you."

"Why the devil not?" I snapped, glaring around at him. Bolting's sort of a sacrament with me, I suppose, and I didn't much fancy the high-handed line he'd taken.

"Because it's lumpy," he said. "They forgot to strain it." I tasted a soupçon and found he was right. I turned back for another look at my neighbor. His lean, dark face showed good bone structure, and there was something about his trench coat and the gravy on his hat that bespoke the inspector of a metropolitan health department.

"Look here," I said, mystified. "You knew that pudding was lumpy?"

"It's my business to know things like that, friend," he said with an opaque smile. As he rose and passed me, a card fluttered down beside my plate. It bore the legend *Colin Rentschler*, and, below, *Inspector, New York Health Department*. I was pretty thoughtful the rest of the meal. Something curious was shaping up, and while I'm not especially intuitive, I felt Colin Rentschler might have some connection with it.

I was seated on the terrace that evening, sipping a final pousse-café before turning in, when his loose-jointed figure settled into the adjoining chair. After a rather watchful silence, he made some inconsequential remark about the écru-colored sky's portending the advent of the mistral, the dry northerly wind characteristic of Provence. "Odd écru-colored sky, that," he observed. "Shouldn't wonder if it portends the advent of the mistral, the dry northerly wind characteristic of Provence."

"Yes," I agreed. "Sinister shade, isn't it? It reminds me of — well, of hollandaise sauce that's gone a trifle bad."

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I heard the sharp, sudden intake of his breath, followed by a little click as he expelled it. When he spoke again, it was in a tight, strangled whisper that put shudders up my spine. "Then you know," he said. He glanced quickly over his shoulder and leaned forward, his eyes merciless as snails. "Listen. Pierre Moustique has been seen in Istanbul."

"Good God!" I murmured. Like everyone else, of course, I knew that New York gourmets were in a grip of terror due to a wave of hollandaise poisoning, and that Moustique, the chef who had betrayed his secret technique of squeezing the sauce through a cheesecloth bag with his bare hands, had escaped to Canada in a hamper of towels, but in the shimmering heat of Morocco I had lost touch with later developments, and my allusion to the evening sky had been made in all innocence. Before I could extricate myself, nonetheless, Fate, in the guise of a health inspector, had altered my future with a single decisive stroke.

"It's incredible" — Rentschler shrugged — "but then so is life. Last Thursday afternoon, Anna Popescu, a Moldavian seamstress in the Kadikoy quarter of Istanbul bearing a Nansen passport, reported that a chef closely resembling Moustique had approached her to repair a rent in a cheesecloth bag, offering ninety piastres. When she hesitated, he fled." His harsh voice stabbed at me, insistent as the cicadas in the Mediterranean night. "Schneider, until we can lay Moustique by the heels and analyze that bag which its poisoned meshes spell finis for unwary epicures, death will lurk in every frond of broccoli. I have two tickets on the morning plane for Istanbul. Are you the man to share a desperate adventure?"

I picked up my glass and, twirling the stem meditatively, swallowed it in a single gulp. A mad, foolhardy errand, I thought, and still the challenge to gamble for consummate stakes awoke a tocsin in my blood. I spat out a spicule of glass, arose, and extended my hand. "Done and done, Rentschler," I said coolly. "I've always taken my liquor mixed and my peril neat, and I see no reason to switch now. Next stop, the Golden Horn!"

Colonel Firdausi, deputy director of the Turkish secret police, hoisted a polished cordovan boot to the edge of his desk and, extracting the monocle from his eye, carefully scraped a bit of *shish kebab* from the sole. As he dusted his delicate, saurian hands with a handkerchief strongly redolent of attar of roses, motes of halvah danced in the slanting beam of sunlight above his head.

"This is a very interesting tale you tell me, gentlemen," he said with a smile. Colonel Firdausi's smile could have refrigerated a whole chain of Turkish frozen-food stores. "But I do not see precisely why you come to me. Surely you do not imply Pierre Moustique is still in Istanbul?"

"I imply that and more." Rentschler's left forefinger traced what was

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seemingly an idle pattern on the dusty arm of his chair, and then I realized with a start that he was scribbling a message to me. "Watch this man's mouth," it read in Italian. "It is willful, sensual, that of a sybarite who will not cavil at resorting to violence if he is bilked." My colleague chuckled thinly, his steady gaze meeting Firdausi's square. "I imply, my dear Colonel, that he is in this selfsame room at the moment."

"You cease to amuse me, Monsieur." The Turkish official rapped the bell before him peremptorily. "The interview is ended. My secretary —"

"One second," cut in Rentschler. "Have you ever heard of the Club Libido, in Pera? No? Allow me to refresh your memory. The principal chanteuse at the Libido is Marie Farkas, a naturalized Transylvanian traveling under a League of Nations passport."

"Neither you nor Marie could possibly hope to surprise me," returned Firdausi icily. "I have been sleeping with the lady fifteen years."

"And therefore enjoy considerable seniority over me," admitted Rentschler. "Nevertheless, she has been fickle enough to confide that on your last two nuptial flights you wore a chef's cap, with the name of Pierre Moustique inscribed on the headband in indelible pencil."

"Inconstancy, thy name is woman," reflected Firdausi. "Ah, well, there is no use dissembling with such adversaries." Reaching into his tunic, he withdrew a green cheesecloth bag and tossed it pettishly on the blotter. "Is this what you are looking for?" As Rentschler's hand shot forward, it struck the ice-blue barrel of the Colonel's automatic. "Tchk, tchk, impetuous boy," chided Firdausi. "Be so good, both of you, as to lace your fingers over your heads. Thank you. Now, Messieurs, exposition is wearisome, so I will be succinct."

"I will be succincter," Rentschler put in. "The real Colonel Firdausi is reposing at this instant in the Bosporus, in a burlap sack weighted with stale nougat. You are about to bind us back to back in a similar pouch and deposit us alongside him, as a warning to meddlers not to interfere in matters that do not concern them. Need I point out, though, Moustique, that you cannot possibly hope to get away with it?"

"Of course not," agreed the other, withdrawing from his tunic a capacious burlap sack. "Still, in the brisk interplay of Near Eastern intrigue, these little — ah — involutions are mandatory. *Au 'voir*, gentlemen."

Forty-five minutes later, trussed up in the sack, we were jolting in a dray over the cobblestones fringing the waterside. Despite our extreme discomfort and the danger confronting us, however, my companion exhibited no hint of the disquiet that pervaded me. Listening to his tranquil comparison of the respective merits of the pickles obtainable at Lindy's and the Russian Tea Room, one might easily have imagined him in his own

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club. At length, my endurance crumbled.

"Dash it all, man!" I burst forth. "Here's one pickle your precious department won't get us out of!"

"No, but Victor Hugo will," he said evenly. "I take it you've read *Les Misérables*?"

"This is hardly the time for a literary quiz," I interjected.

"You will recall," said Rentschler imperturbably, "that at an equally crucial pass Jean Valjean confounded Papa Thenardier and his gang by sawing through his bonds with a watch spring concealed in a penny. Tug manfully at your wrists." I complied, and, to my stupefaction, found myself liberated. The next thing I knew, Rentschler and I were racing through a maze of warehouses and cranes; I remember a ship's gangway clangorous with roustabouts shifting cargo, a lightning descent into a labyrinth of hatches, and, over the bellow of the siren, my colleague's unruffled explanation that we were stowaways aboard the Thessalonian *Schizophrene*, bound for the Piraeus and Trieste. Actually, we never went to either; a few hours later, Rentschler nudged me and we stole back on land. The whole thing had been a clever feint, for, as he pointed out, nobody was chasing us and there was no reason to slip out of the country illicitly. That night, seated in the aircraft droning toward London, I dully wondered what fresh complications lay in wait for us. But Fate and the stewardess, a shapely Philadelphian named Dougherty traveling under a nylon bust support, gave me back only an inscrutable smile.

Thin fingers of fog drifted across the West India Dock Road, tracing an eerie filigree across the street lamp under which Rentschler and I stood shivering in our mackintoshes. From time to time, almond-eyed devotees of the poppy, furtively hugging poppyseed rolls, slid past us in their bast shoes, bent on heaven knows what baleful missions. For more than three hours, we had been breathlessly watching the draper's shop across the way, and I still had no clue as to why. Rentschler, shrewd judge of human foibles that he was, must have sensed my perplexity, for at last he broke silence.

"In the split-second you saw that bag of Moustique's, Schneider," he queried, "did any thought occur to you?"

"Why, yes," I said, surprised. "I remember thinking there was only one shop in Europe that handles cheesecloth of that type — Arthur Maggot's Sons, in the West India Dock Road. But I still can't fathom why we've spent three hours casing it."

"No particular reason," he rejoined. "It's just the kind of patient, plodding labor the public never gives one credit for in this profession. Come on, let's move in."

Bartholomew Maggot shrugged his vulpine shoulders irascibly and, applying a pinch of Copenhagen snuff

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to his nostril, opened the cash register and sneezed into it. A half-hour's questioning had merely aggravated his normally waspish temper, and it was dishearteningly plain that we had reached an impasse. Rentschler, notwithstanding, refused to yield.

"This man who asked you to appraise his cheesecloth bag yesterday," he persisted. "You say he was hooded and smelled of attar of roses, but surely you must have noticed something unusual about him."

"No, sir, I did not," growled the draper. "Wait a bit, though, there *was* something. His lapel had a few grains of rice powder on it — the sort those French music-hall artistes wear."

"You've a sharp pair of eyes in your head, Maggot," complimented the inspector. "It's a pity we don't know where they came from."

"Why, this one came from Harrod's," explained Maggot, removing it. "It's glass, as you see, and has a little Union Jack in it. The other —"

"No, no, the grains," Rentschler interrupted testily. "Haven't you any idea which music hall uses that type of powder?"

"Let me see," said Maggot slowly. "The cove was carrying a theatrical valise with the name of Pierre Moustique, Bobino Theatre, Rue de la Gaité, Paris, France, painted on it in white letters, but I didn't really pay much mind."

"Humph," muttered Rentschler. His quick, deductive mind had caught something of importance in the other's words. "A very good evening to you, Mr. Maggot, and now, Schneider, to Paris *en grand vitesse*. Are you hungry? I think I can promise a ragout spiced with melodrama and served piping hot." I have often thought the world lost a major poet when Colin Rentschler joined the New York Health Department.

The mingled scent of caporal, cheap perfume, and garlic hung like a pall over the motley audience jamming the stalls of the Bobino, the Left Bank's most popular vaudeville. A succession of weight-lifters, trained dogs, diseuses, and trick cyclists had displayed their enchantments, and now, as the curtain rose on the final turn and M. l'Inconnu, the masked juggler, strode into the glare of the footlights, my heart began beating like a trip hammer. Those delicate, saurian hands, the heavy odor of attar of roses — I racked my memory vainly, trying to recollect where I had met them before. A buzz of excited speculation rose from the patrons surrounding us; rumor ran rife that l'Inconnu was an unfrocked chef from New York, a quondam Turkish police official, a recent arrival from Limehouse, but none knew for sure. Yet some sixth sense told me that Rentschler, his hawk's profile taut in the darkness beside me, was close to the answer.

"*Messieurs et dames!*" The guttural voice of Pierre Moustique suddenly set my every nerve atingle. "I now attempt a feat to dizzy the imagination, keeping *trois boules* [three balls]

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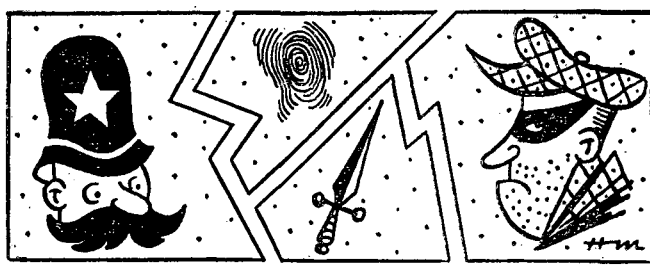
suspended in the air simultaneously!" From the depths of his cape, he brought forth a green cheesecloth bag and spun three mothballs into swift rotating motion.

Rentschler sprang up with a choked cry. "*Gobe-mouche* that I am! Blockhead!" he exclaimed. "Don't you see, Schneider? That's why the hollandaise laid those diners low — he used that very bag to squeeze the sauce, indifferent to the fact that it had contained mothballs! Seal the exits! Stop that man!" But it was too late; with a snarled imprecation, Moustique sprang toward the wings. In the shrill hubbub that ensued, I inexplicably found myself dancing a java with a comely grisette; then Rentschler, flinging people aside like ninepins, was pulling me through a skylight and we were hurtling across the rooftops after our quarry. In reality, my associate explained as we hurtled, Moustique had left the Bobino in a cab, but protocol precluded our following him in any such mundane fashion.

"He's heading for the Ritz," panted the inspector. "A group of asparagus connoisseurs are holding their annual feed there tonight, which the columns of *Le Figaro* have been full of it for a week. Superfluous to add that if this blackguard, who is cooking for them under a nom de plume, compounds his lethal dressing, why the poor fools will be stretched out in windrows. I've a pretty — good — hunch, though," he panted on, clearing the Rue du Cherche-Midi with a bound, "that we're about to tie a kink in his mayonnaise whip."

Well, we didn't. Two minutes afterward, Rentschler tripped over a loose gargoyle and dashed out his brains in the Quai Voltaire. I pressed on to the Ritz, but I must have crept in through the wrong dormer, because I wound up at a too, too marvellous gala at the Vicomtesse de Noailles'. Edith and Osbert and Sacheverell were there, and they gave me a simply divine recipe for my book. It's called Continental Upside-Down Chowchow, and here's what you do. You take a double handful of exotic locales. . . .



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STRANGER IN THE PARK

by THOMAS WALSH

THEY MET FOR THE FIRST TIME, Mr. Carnes and O'Neill, around 5:30 on a breathless August afternoon, in a dingy bed-sitting room, third-floor rear, of the Grosvenor Furnished Apartments on East Madison Street. As soon as Mr. Carnes stepped in from the landing, his heart pumping from the stairs, and from something else, too, he felt the force of heat compacted in that square room under the roof explode against his flesh in savagely tiny shells of perspiration — felt it so intently, if only for a moment, that the walls and the two shaded windows wavered before him, while a weakness he could not control began to quiver in the hollows behind his knees.

He told himself what that weakness came from: only the heat. Still, he stopped a few steps in from the doorway to conceal it, nodding at O'Neill, smiling at him, speaking rather quickly but with no obvious effect of fright. His name, he said, was Roger Carnes, and he understood that he was wanted here. Even though he could not see why —

"Sit down," O'Neill said. His voice was cross. He had been in that room since four o'clock, a few minutes after the body of Rose Elizabeth Daly had been found there, and he sat behind a littered table now with his coat off, his shirt sleeves rolled up to the elbow and his wilted collar gaping wide at his throat. He didn't look nearly so clever as Mr. Carnes had been afraid he would look; a stout man in middle age, bald-headed, with a solid, rock-like chin, he just appeared determined, irritable, and very hot.

He wasted no time at all. He said, as Mr. Carnes seated himself, "We wanted to see you — that's right. We sent a squad car over after you because there was a woman strangled here last night — a woman named Rose Elizabeth Daly. She was found on this sofa in back of me at four o'clock this afternoon. What we want" — he paused and mopped his face, his voice flattening out a bit — "what we want now is to find out what you knew about her."

Mr. Carnes stared at him.

"Strangled?" he said, in a soft, shocked voice. He had a slight advantage then, as it began; he knew what he was fighting for, if he didn't know yet exactly how they had got his name. But the fear he had was not a fear that showed in his voice, his face, or in anything about him; it shaped him instead, like an animal fear, an urgent impression of danger, to a state of sharp and desperate alertness. A tall, thin man in a well-cut gabardine suit, staring directly into O'Neill's face with pale blue eyes that were properly shocked, he said quietly,

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candidly, and very gravely, that he had never heard of this Rose Elizabeth Daly in his life.

O'Neill, his own eyes shaded by heavy dark brows, stared back at him for a matter of seconds. Then, bending forward, he reached out for a telephone book that lay on the corner of the table at his left. When he picked it up it fell open naturally part way in, where a packet of matches had been set between the pages. Halfway up the middle column, on the page nearest him, Mr. Carnes could see that a name had been underscored in pencil.

O'Neill moved his finger down till it rested on that mark.

"We found it like this," he said. "The matches and the pencil mark, understand, as if the number was one she'd looked up before and wanted to remember. Here's the listing: Roger Carnes, 54 Jellicoe Road, Tuxedo 8262. I think that's you?"

"Yes." Mr. Carnes did not hesitate at all. "Yes, it is." But he concealed a savage rush of anger behind the sallow mask of his face in the same way that he had concealed his fear before. Last night he had gone through everything; last night, being a careful man, he had not immediately hurried away. But the telephone book — no, he had not gone through that. Who would have imagined —

It seemed to him, suddenly, that he had taken too long to answer, that in O'Neill's dark eyes there was the glint of a new and more suspicious sharpness. He smiled stiffly. Deny it, he thought — deny it all. If they knew, they knew. But if they had only this —

Mr. Carnes did not lose his head. He simply frowned as if he were puzzled.

"That," he said, "that — I can't understand it. My name —" The frown deepened; he spoke more slowly. "Here," he said, "perhaps she didn't mark it to call me; she may have been talking to one of the servants. Have you thought of that?"

Apparently O'Neill had, though he did not answer directly. How many servants were there?

"Ambrose," Mr. Carnes said. "My man. And the maids — three of those. And the cook. Five."

"Five," O'Neill repeated. "Well, I guess I'll want to talk to them. Would they all be out there now?"

"No," Mr. Carnes told him. "I'm sorry. Only Ambrose is with me at the moment. The others are with Mrs. Carnes, at Seabright; we've a summer place there, you know. I can phone tonight, if you like, and have them here some time tomorrow. Anything at all I can do to help —"

O'Neill got up.

"You could do that, maybe. I'd like to see them. Tomorrow afternoon, say. Sometime around three?"

"Three," Mr. Carnes agreed, not getting up himself until O'Neill looked pointedly at his watch. Mr. Carnes had been braced for something more than this — for questions, tricky questions, or perhaps even an attempt at bullying. Because he got neither of

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those things now he began to feel dimly apprehensive.

A man came up the hall stairs. "Marty," this man said, glancing quickly at Mr. Carnes before he turned to O'Neill, "here's something, Marty. The landlady tells me —"

"Half a minute," O'Neill growled at him, waiting stolidly then for Mr. Carnes to go. A careful man, Mr. Carnes thought, nodding to them both and turning to the door; not clever, just careful. Well — Mr. Carnes was careful, too. He went out to the landing. It was empty now; the policeman, the one who had been lounging there when Mr. Carnes came up fifteen minutes ago, was gone — downstairs, probably, for a breath of air.

Mr. Carnes saw instantly what that meant. He moved down a few steps, firmly, but stopped when his head was just below the level of the flooring. O'Neill might get careless now; O'Neill might believe the policeman was out there yet, so that no one could possibly listen. Even careful men sometimes —

In the room over him the second man said, "A girl got the front apartment here, Marty — right next door. The old gal downstairs finally calmed down enough to tell me that. See what that means? She heard what went on in here last night — she had to. These walls ain't no thicker than cardboard."

Mr. Carnes, standing very still outside, with the skylight set above him like a great creamy bubble of blistering heat, did not worry himself about the girl. He knew all about her. Last night, on the phone, Rose had told him he needn't be afraid of anyone seeing him when he came; the girl on the floor with her, the only other tenant, would be out. At the hospital, visiting a sick friend.

"Suppose she wasn't in," O'Neill said, putting his finger on that, too. "You thought of that?"

"She was in, Marty — the landlady swears to it. She was gonna go out to City Hospital, to see someone she knew there; but after supper she got a headache, and put it off."

Put it off, Mr. Carnes thought. He did not move at all but his face changed a bit, his flesh whitened slowly around the cheekbones. She couldn't have put it off. Rose had told him, when he asked, that the girl was gone, that —

Perspiration dropped into his eyes. He thought of something else Rose had said bitterly, when she met him on the landing last night. Not like Jellicoe Road, not much like that here, is it, Mr. Roger Carnes? And the door to third-floor front had been open then, not because the girl was out, but because she had a headache, and wanted whatever breeze there was. She had heard that, the girl in the third-floor front — the name, the address, everything.

He began to feel queer, empty, and small inside.

O'Neill growled above him, "What's her name? Didn't you try to get hold of her?"

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"Wilson, Marty — Carol Wilson. I called up the office where the landlady said she works, but it's closed for the day. And Friday night the landlady says she always stays downtown to have supper with the boy friend and see a movie. It'll be close to twelve before she shows up here again. Unless you want to hunt through the movies downtown for her."

O'Neill must have considered that for a moment. Then he said peevishly, "We might as well hang around here; she may be back early. I'm too hot right now to chase all over town after some little empty-head that won't know nothing at all."

Are you? Mr. Carnes thought, one hand gripped hard on the stair rail. Are you, my friend O'Neill? He moved down quickly and quietly, thinking of Carol Wilson. He knew what he had to do now, and he did not shrink from it.

She met Jimmy a little before 6, in the crowded drug store at the corner of Redwood and Pine. She should have been there half an hour before, but she had stopped to do some shopping on the way, and when she appeared now around the perfume counter Jimmy looked down resignedly at his watch.

"Not bad tonight," he said. "Not bad at all. I had a swell time standing here. I've been thinking what you'd do if I didn't wait. I've been thinking that next week —"

She wrinkled up her mouth at him. She wasn't worried about next week, she said; lately she'd had more than a suspicion that she was too good for him anyway. "The glamour girl," he said, and scowled at her, but she could tell he wasn't really angry. He never was on Fridays. That night, pay night, was the special night of all the week, when they decided between the seafood dinner at the Chesapeake Tavern and the blueplate special at the Roma Spaghetti House; when they picked out the picture they wanted to see and talked over the multitude of things that had happened since Wednesday, the last time they'd been together.

From Wednesday to Friday there were only two days; yet those two days always seemed to them both a very long collection of hours. They had met each other in February, and since June they had been engaged. She was a slim girl, dark and pretty, with the deep blue eyes that are almost black, and the slender, high-placed cheekbones that shape a young face to delicate and rather wistful lines. After they pushed in to the fountain they smiled at each other faintly in the mirror, because it was Friday night now, six o'clock, and nothing else mattered much.

"What a day I put in!" Jimmy told her. "I'll bet it hit 90 in the office." He paused. "Let's see now — you got any ideas? They got a stage show at the Strand and at the Century —"

They fixed on the Century, and the Roma Spaghetti House, because it was only around the corner.

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O'Neill hung around the house on East Madison Street till after eight, but he didn't find anything there that helped him. Rose Elizabeth Daly had left some things behind her — four dresses, a couple of pairs of cheap shoes, a Confessions magazine, a single traveling bag that had seen a lot of use. But she had left no letters and the labels had been clipped neatly out of her clothes. Rose Elizabeth Daly — all they knew about her was that name. But suppose, O'Neill thought gloomily, it wasn't her right one?

There was no way he could be sure even of that. She had lived on East Madison Street just four days; she had had, so far as the landlady knew, no callers at all. No job, either. No friends. That's all O'Neill had discovered.

It wasn't much. In a tavern around the corner, over a sandwich and a glass of beer, O'Neill went over it doggedly enough, without seeing a spark of light anywhere. At twenty to nine, when he walked back to the house, Stanton met him on the stoop. No dice, he said, the Wilson girl hadn't got back; now they were stuck till twelve.

Settling himself on the stoop, because it seemed like the coolest place around, O'Neill prepared to wait. Very soon a sleek young man came up the steps from the pavement, looked at O'Neill incuriously, and went on to the vestibule; from there he must have seen Danaher, the uniformed cop on duty, talking to the landlady in the lower hall. Quietly, as if he didn't care to be noticed, the sleek young man moved down again to O'Neill.

He made his second mistake there; but then, shirt-sleeved like the men on the stoops all around him, O'Neill didn't look much like a cop.

"What goes on?" the young man asked him in a rather worried voice. "What's the law inside for, bud?" As soon as he had spoken he licked his lips; he had just found out then that O'Neill looked a whole lot different when he raised his head and stared at you. Not, the young man said, that he cared. He didn't want anybody here; he must have made a mistake in the house. He'd push off now and —

He didn't push off. He went inside with O'Neill. There, his eyes fixed sullenly on the floor, he said he didn't know what this was all about; he'd just noticed the law around and got curious. They couldn't hang him for that.

"Can't we?" O'Neill said, and nodded somberly at Stanton. "Give him a ride, Eddie; take him downtown and lock him up."

"Okay," Stanton said. "Stand up and take the big rap, brother."

It worked with the young man, as it had worked with many others. He got up staring. He whispered:

"The big rap? The big — Murder?" Then ripples of fear broke, jellylike, from the corners of his mouth. "Wait a minute now. You never said anything about that. You never — if it's Rose —"

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The young man began to seem like a bit of luck. O'Neill told him to sit down again.

"It's Rose," he said. "What do you know about her?"

The young man knew a good deal. In a broken voice, beads of sweat glittering like glass on his cheeks, he told O'Neill that if Rose was dead he knew who killed her: Harry Daly. He started off as simply as that, before O'Neill had even lit a cigar.

She'd married this Harry Daly, and lived with him for a couple of months, out in Los Angeles the winter of '35. That long ago, the young man said, when this Daly was a bookie out there, handling small bets, and playing the horses himself on the side. But he never got on with her; the first time he'd got hold of some dough, when a filly he'd hocked his shirt for came romping in at 40-to-1, he just picked up the take and skipped East.

"Five years ago," the young man said, blinking up painfully into O'Neill's stolid face. "I never knew them then, understand; I only met Rose last winter. She told me all this stuff a little while ago, when we began to think of hooking up — that she couldn't, see? because this Harry Daly was still her husband. In the five years since he left she'd only heard from him once, when he sent her five hundred bucks from the East — from this town — to get a divorce. She was hard up then, and she didn't spend the dough on lawyers; she just got hold of some shyster for $50, and he filled out some forms for her, just like he'd attended to everything proper and legal.

"When she told me all this I figured" — he rubbed his mouth shakily, paused for a moment, and moved his eyes away from O'Neill — "well, that he'd treated her like a rat, and that if he'd pay five hundred bucks to get rid of her we probably had hold of something good here. So we came East, see? and started to hunt him up. She didn't have his address; she'd always written to him General Delivery down here, but after she sent on the fake papers he never called around for any more mail.

"But we figured he was located somewhere around this part of the country — this city, probably, since she'd written to him here — and that he'd never give up the horses, no matter what happened to him. Last Monday, out at Pimlico, she spotted him in the clubhouse, and I got his car number when he left, and found out where to locate him through that. I never thought —"

He began to cry weakly, and O'Neill gave him a cigarette.

"I never thought he'd do anything like this. All we were looking for was a stake. The way he was set here, he could have paid her five grand like nothing. So I got her to rent this place alone, because if he knew anything about me, or found out she wanted the divorce, too, he wouldn't pay out as much for her to get it."

"He thought she was alone?" O'Neill asked. "That none of her friends out on the coast knew where

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she was?" He began to see it. Harry Daly hadn't paid off; he had killed her instead.

"Five thousand," he added slowly. "That's a lot of money. Why would he pay her all that just to divorce him?"

Between sobs the young man explained that too: When he'd come East five years ago, splurging away the dough he'd won, he met a rich dame that grew stuck on him. He wanted the divorce to marry her. He did marry her, after he got those fake papers. And then when Rose showed up again, not divorced at all, ready to kick up a row and spoil his fancy setup —

O'Neill put on his yellowed Panama. Where would they find this Harry Daly now?

The young man forgot his sorrow; his eyes narrowed venomously. Out in the high-hat section, he said — out in a big brick dump his wife owned on Jellicoe Road. Carnes, he called himself there — Roger Carnes.

"Carnes," O'Neill repeated softly. He looked at Stanton, and Stanton looked at him.

Behind them, in the darkened dining room, a clock struck nine slow chimes.

It was a good show at the Century — a romantic comedy about a girl and her boss who quarreled constantly and couldn't endure each other, and who never suspected once, all the way through, that they were very much in love. Roland Young had a part in it, and Carol always liked Roland Young. She was smiling up at his droll face on the screen when the usher came down the aisle. He was paging somebody, but she didn't pay much attention to the name until Jimmy touched her arm. Then through the wave of laughter that followed something Roland Young said, she heard the usher's voice:

"Miss Carol Wilson, Miss Carol Wilson, Miss Carol Wilson. . . ."

She thought at once of her sister, and of the sister's husband who had a habit of driving fast, as with Jimmy's hand on her arm, and her heart pounding furiously, she followed the usher across the lobby to an office.

The manager was waiting for her there. They'd just had a call from St. Agnes Hospital, he said; he was sorry to say there'd been an accident. Her mother —

For a moment she was breathless over the beating in her chest.

"My mother?" she said, her voice curiously muffled. "But that's — my mother's dead. They didn't say my sister? Mrs. Joseph Crane?"

The manager was pretty sure they hadn't said that.

"Here," Jimmy put in then, "call Evelyn up. He'll let you use the phone."

She was so excited then that for an instant she couldn't think of the number; it was Jimmy, blessedly practical, who remembered that. Three agonizing times, on the other end of the line, the signal burred shrilly. Then —

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"Hello," Evelyn said. No, they hadn't gone out tonight; she and Joe were just playing bridge with the Nolans. Was anything wrong?

"Not now," Carol said, a deep breath filling her. "It's some mistake. But it — it frightened me for a moment, darling — something about St. Agnes Hospital. Kiss the baby for me now; I'll be out tomorrow with Jimmy."

Still — nerves, of course — a remnant of that sick dread clung to her after she hung up, so that her voice shook a little when she spoke to the manager. The call wasn't for her; some other girl, perhaps, with the same name —

The manager thought that would be it, too. He was very sorry to have worried her.

Outside, standing against the lobby wall, a tall man in a gabardine suit watched her go back to the orchestra. He had a narrow, gray-fleshed face lined with strain about the mouth, and when she had gone inside with Jimmy he sat down in one of the lobby easy chairs, and looked down at his watch once or twice as if he were waiting for someone to meet him.

He sat there a long time, until the early show was over, and they came out with the last of the crowd. Then he got up, and walked out directly behind them. It was still early then, nine twenty-five, and Jimmy suggested Lookout Park.

Carol was a little uncertain about that.

"I know what you'll do there," she said, "take chances on every single thing, and spend your money like water. If we just took that nice bus ride around the park —"

"On pay night?" Jimmy looked pained. "Act your age, hon. No chances tonight — I'll promise you that. We'll just eat some ice cream and dance a little. Bill Howard's taking Jenny out there later, when she gets off duty. I kind of promised we'd meet them there."

Well, Carol said, if he really meant that about the chances —

Mr. Carnes stood directly behind them, listening.

He followed them out to the corner, and got on the same bus they took. There was, after all, no tremendous rush; to be safe he could wait a little longer. O'Neill — he wasn't worried about O'Neill. Back there, on East Madison Street, O'Neill would still be scratching his head.

He was wrong about that. At the moment, the door of 54 Jellicoe Road open before him, O'Neill was showing his badge. "Police," he said laconically. "Mr. Carnes around?"

His brows drew together, rather harshly, when Ambrose told him Mr. Carnes could not be disturbed. He had retired early, with a vile headache, and he had warned Ambrose that under no circumstances was he to be annoyed.

"Nuts," Stanton said, and pushed on into the hall ahead of O'Neill. There were a few words there with Ambrose before the three of them

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moved together — quietly, O'Neill warned — up the wide curve of the stairway. After they reached the master chamber and turned on the lights that showed an empty bed between the windows, Ambrose seemed to lose the rest of his assurance.

This was something he couldn't understand. At half-past seven, bringing up some aspirin, he himself had seen Mr. Carnes here in his pajamas. Received his instructions, too. Mr. Carnes would see no one; Mr. Carnes would not even answer a phone call.

O'Neill frowned. "You didn't see him go out? Or hear him?"

"No, sir. I was reading the paper in the kitchen, at the end of the hall. He wanted me to stay up; he said he might want a sandwich later. I wouldn't have heard him on the front stairway from there. Not if he didn't wish me to."

"Scrammed," Stanton said, looking wisely at O'Neill. "Lost his head and lit out. Well — what do we do now, Marty? Phone in an alarm?"

O'Neill took off his Panama and rubbed a handkerchief around the inner band, thinking that over. Then he said:

"He didn't scram. Why should he? He figured that she was a stranger here, this Rose Elizabeth Daly. He figured we'd never find out who she really was, and he was close to being right on that. From his side, not knowing about the bird we picked up back there and the story we got from him, he didn't have a thing to worry about."

"Then what did he sneak out for?"

Taking the handkerchief away from his hat, O'Neill ran it around the rim of his collar.

"Take it this way," he said. "He comes home here, gets into pajamas, goes to bed and calls up — Ambrose, are you? — to see him there. Tells him to stay up, too, that he'll ring later, and then slips out. Ambrose didn't see him go out, and the chances are he wouldn't see him come in. So far as Ambrose knows, he's been here all the while. He didn't expect us till tomorrow, remember, so he wasn't worried about that. He's here in bed at 7:30, he's here in bed when he rings for Ambrose again after he gets back. He's got himself an alibi then — not perfect, but good. Only what was that alibi set up to cover?"

He himself couldn't see anything. If Carnes realized that he'd missed something, that he'd left an opening behind him he had to plug up — Doggedly, patiently, O'Neill went back over everything in search of that opening, but in the end it was Stanton who stumbled on it.

"The Wilson girl?" he suggested. "I been thinking about her, Marty; I been thinking that if she really heard something, and that if Carnes got worried about her, he'd knock her off, too. Say he listened to us talking about her —"

"From where?" O'Neill grunted. "Wasn't Danaher out on the landing to keep him moving after he left?"

"Well —" Stanton said. He looked at everything in the room but

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O'Neill's face. "Not just then he wasn't. When I came up to tell you about her, Danaher was in the kitchen getting himself some water. I —"

O'Neill, who didn't curse often, cursed now. Something tight, a pressing consciousness of lost time and danger, whipped itself around his head. The Wilson girl, the little empty-head he'd called her —

He did what Mr. Carnes had done two hours ago; he began to call the downtown theaters, the Century first because he'd been there himself last night, and it was the one he instinctively thought of. When the manager there told him about the other message O'Neill's fingers tingled coldly.

Of course, he thought. Carnes had her placed now. A call from a nearby drug store, a cock-and-bull story about the hospital, and then a little wait around the manager's office till the usher came out — Carnes might have tried others; at the Century he'd found her. Now —

O'Neill, not sweating now merely from the heat, did what he could; he had the manager at the Century flash her name and address on the screen, so this time she'd know it wasn't a mistake. Five minutes later, when the manager called back, O'Neill's heart dropped like a stone inside him. She wasn't there now. She'd left. So it ended there; at the Century he hit that last dead stop. He went back with Stanton to the house on East Madison Street and he found what he expected to find in the third-floor front — no one at all.

There was a picture on the dresser, a good-looking young man who might be the boy friend. O'Neill ripped it out of the frame, turned it over, and read the photographer's inscription off the back.

"244 Doane Street," he told Stanton breathlessly. "Make it fast."

At 244 Doane Street the photographer who had taken the picture came down from his apartment over the studio. He remembered it at once; it wasn't a month since he'd taken it. He gave O'Neill the name and the address — a big brick apartment.

There J. J. Martin was one of two names bracketed over the bell of Apartment 3E in the vestibule; the other, Wm. F. Howard, was the one who answered O'Neill's ring. Jimmy? he said. Why he was going to meet Jimmy later, after eleven, when his girl friend — a nurse — finished her stretch of three to eleven at the hospital. They were going to meet Jimmy and his girl at Lookout Park.

O'Neill got in some phoning, too hasty to be explicit, and then he sat crowded between Stanton and Bill Howard for the longest ride in his life — seven miles, six minutes, through the suburbs to Lookout Park.

The two squad cars he'd phoned for were already by the gate, with four uniformed men gathered around the turnstiles as if they weren't quite certain what to do. O'Neill, sweeping them in with him, was stopped by Bill Howard just as they reached the midway. Jimmy, Bill Howard yelled at him — over there at the stand.

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O'Neill didn't turn at once. She's with him, he thought savagely; she's got to be with him. She's safe now. She's — He jerked around, his flesh hanging heavily on him, the blood hammering in his head. Ten feet away, on the left, a young man stood before the frozen custard stand.

He was the young man of the picture, and O'Neill saw that he was alone.

At half-past ten, when the bus let them off at Lookout Park, they wandered slowly up the midway, past the freak show and the House of Fun and the Whip and the Tunnel of Love. Then they began to climb the broad stone steps that went up the hill toward the dance pavilion.

Once, some distance behind them, she noticed a man in a gabardine suit. He was a tall man, walking with his head slightly bent.

They paused again in the tiny park just below the pavilion, where stone benches were scattered here and there in pools of shadow beneath the trees. Beyond the stairs, in the velvety-soft darkness of a hedge, they found an empty place — cool and quiet, with the dance music not too loud above them, and the midway lights glittering and winking below.

They sat down there. Jimmy said it was early yet, that Bill and Jenny wouldn't be out for quite a while. So they could take it easy here, or go inside and have a dance.

"It's nice out here," Carol said. "Let's just sit."

There were couples on the other benches — very quiet couples, not too near around them, and somewhere far off a carrousel began to tinkle.

"I'll say it's nice," Jimmy said, rubbing her cheek gently with his fingers. "Any place would have to be nice with you. Happy?"

"Uh-huh," she said dreamily.

"Anything you want?"

"A million dollars," she said. "And someone like you coming home every night with the evening paper."

"Someone like me?" he murmured in her ear. "You better change that — you better make it only me. Gonna?"

"Gonna," she said. "Cross my heart."

That was better, he told her, lots better; now how about a frozen custard while they waited? He could slip down and get one for her before she knew he'd gone. She didn't protest too much, because of the stairs, and because Jimmy said there was no sense to both of them puffing up those again. She sat there, waiting for him to get back, while the couple on the next bench got up and moved off, and other couples, from other benches, began to straggle after them.

Soon, save for the man in the gabardine suit, she seemed to be alone. He had followed them; now he turned to stare at Carol — so directly that she thought she knew what he was trying to do. Fresh, she thought, with a slight flush, and moved around on the bench so that she wouldn't have to look back at him. Then very softly,

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quite near her, she heard a shoe scuff gravel. It was that — that fool, of course, the smart lady-killer in the gabardine suit. Not nervous then, because she'd had to handle his kind before, she said in a furious low voice as he sat down beside her:

"You'd better get away from here. If you're around when my friend comes back, he'll punch your nose."

"Will he?" the stranger asked. His voice was oddly menacing, not the kind of voice she thought it would be. In the dimness his face glistened like sallow clay. She was frightened, and tried to move away from him.

But he had caught her wrist then, with his left hand; his right, in his hip pocket, was feeling for the scarf. It was a thin silk scarf, and very strong; last night, in East Madison Street, it had glimmered against Rose Daly's throat like a shadow of light.

If he could keep her quiet now for just a moment —

"I only want your purse," he said. "Don't be fool enough to scream."

A light flashed across them; Carol had not heard the steps that brought it. Mr. Carnes hadn't either. He froze above her, his head half turned, his teeth showing between his lips.

She saw a glimmer of gray — the uniform of the private police they had at Lookout Park.

"Break it up," a voice said. "Break it up now. We close the garden here at eleven; you two are the only ones left. You got to get out now."

"Thank you," Mr. Carnes said, the scarf crumpled up in his palm.

He moved out three steps before Carol found her voice. Then she breathed something, and Mr. Carnes began to run. He was twenty years younger than the special cop, and fifty pounds lighter, and he reached the stairs a good bit ahead. Reached them and started down them, and tried to stop and stumbled on an edge. He fell forward but not far; Jimmy and a long-legged cop, who were a little faster-moving than O'Neill and the others, grabbed for him together.

She told Jimmy, while they took the man in the gabardine suit away, that it was nothing, he'd only wanted her purse. The way Jimmy looked when he reached her, so wild and excited, and almost unable to speak, calmed her at once. Her voice grew steady and her breath came once more under control.

"I wasn't worried about that," she said. "One week's pay! I was just afraid that you'd come back too soon, and fight him, and —"

O'Neill came up to her. She had to smile at him, he was such a funny-looking man — fat, soaked with perspiration, breathless, his Panama shaking in his hand. Police, O'Neill croaked — they'd been looking for her. They'd —

He stopped there as if he had to stop, but she couldn't keep the smile from the corners of her mouth.

"Me?" she said, and almost laughed aloud, that was so silly. "Looking for me? But — why? And whatever for?"

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THE CASE OF THE ARCTIC EXPLORERS

by AUSTIN RIPLEY

PROFESSOR FORDNEY PICKED UP A typewritten sheet from his desk. "I have here," he said, "a rather interesting statement. It concerns a violent death, and is made by the only witness — a man who might find it very much to his advantage to distort the truth. It is a kind of statement you may well encounter many times in the future.

"Please listen carefully."

The Professor then read the following to his class in criminology:

"I never expected to get back alive. The weather was cold and clear when Frank Hayes and I left for our base camp on the Arctic Circle on the morning of September 8, 1932. Three days later, on the 11th, an icy, howling wind came up as we set out . . . the worst I've ever seen. We had gone not more than two miles when Hayes took a terrific fall and was blown along the jagged ice for some distance. I managed to get him on the sled, but he knew he was fatally injured and hadn't long to live. Knowing how much in sympathy I am with his scientific theories, he said he wanted to make a will, leaving his fortune to me so I might carry on his work. I tried to dissuade him but, taking some paper and a fountain pen from his kit, he insisted I write at his dictation. He signed it and in less than an hour he was dead.

"I had to shoot two of the dogs that had been injured. All the others, but one, got away, so it was impossible for me to get the body back.

"The wind died down shortly after Frank passed on.

(signed) Joseph Dennis."

Fordney put down the letter and said, "I want you to tell me whether you accept this story as true . . . and why. Quickly now!"

Do you? Why? You will find the solution at the bottom of the page, printed upside-down.

The story was, of course, untrue. The ink in the fountain pen would have been frozen.

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WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

Just when Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn have the spring fever, and have it bad, they are summoned to visit Tom's Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas, who are in considerable trouble and would like to have the boys with them for "comfort." A rich neighbor, Brace Dunlap, wants to marry Aunt Sally's and Uncle Silas's daughter, Benny, but the parents have told him p'int blank he can't. Apparently, Brace Dunlap is now making things rough for Tom's relatives who, in an attempt to appease Dunlap, have hired his shiftless, no-good brother, Jubiter, to work on Uncle Silas's farm. Jubiter is one of twins, and his twin brother, Jake, is a notorious thief who hasn't been seen for seven years and is supposed to have come to a very bad end.

Well, Tom and Huck take a Mississippi River steamboat, and on board they learn of a mysterious passenger. By a ruse they get into his stateroom. The passenger turns out to be the supposedly dead Jake Dunlap, who, terrified for his life, is being hunted by two ex-partners in crime, also on the boat. Jake tells the boys how he, Bud Dixon, and Hal Clayton stole two di'monds as big as hazelnuts, and not being able to divide up two di'monds amongst three, began doublecrossing each other. Finally, Jake got possession of the di'monds and now has them hidden in the hollow of one of his boot-heels.

Well, the steamboat's machinery breaks down, and one night, while the engines are being fixed, Jake, disguised in blue goggles and the naturalest-looking false whiskers, makes his getaway. But his former pals get wind of it and take after him. Tom and Huck are pretty sorrowful over Jake's chances of staying alive.

Well, the boys had promised to meet Jake in a little bunch of sycamores right back of Tom's Uncle Silas's tobacker-field. So, on landing, they go straight to the sycamores where they see a couple of men running into the grove and hear two or three terrible screams for help. Then, from a hiding place, they see four men running out of the grove, two chasing two. They are sure now that Jake Dunlap has been caught up with and killed. Then, to their horror, they see something coming towards them in the shadder of the trees. It is Jake Dunlap's ghost!

Well, the ghost disappears as suddenly as it had appeared, and as Tom and Huck walk to Uncle Silas's house, Tom remembers that the ghost was not barefooted. It had its boots on. From this Tom figures out that Jake's pursuers didn't get the di'monds. Tom then formulates a plan: there will

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be an inquest; after the verdict of the jury and the burial of Jake's body, they'll auction off his things for to pay the expenses, and then's our *chance — to buy Jake's boots, containing the di'monds, for two dollars!*

Well, that night, after having been welcomed by the family, Tom and Huck steal out and fetch up in a watermelon-patch and eat one, and have a good deal of talk. Later that night they catch sight of a man poking around in the yard. They think it is Uncle Silas, who just before sundown has been seen with Jubiter, spading up some ground. Still later that night a thunderstorm deluges the neighborhood. By daylight the rain has stopped, and Tom and Huck go back to the sycamore grove. Tom creeps in — and the next minute out he comes again with his eyes bulging, he is so excited, and says: "Huck, it's gone!" The corpse of Jake Dunlap is gone, and with it the di'monds!

Well, the next time the boys go to the woods they again see Jake Dunlap's ghost, this time in broad daylight. But it ain't a ghost at all — it's Jake his own self, disguised in goggles and whiskers, and pretending to be deef and dumb. And all this time there's been no sign of Jubiter. Pretty soon a report gets around that p'raps Jubiter's been murdered. So the people hunt the woods for Jubiter's remainders, but find nary a trace of him. Then Tom gets himself an idea: he and Huck borrow a bloodhound and the dog sets up a long howl in a far corner of the tobacker-field, where digging reveals the body and clothes of poor Jubiter, his face horribly mutilated.

Well, when Tom and Huck bring the news home, with Tom boasting he'll find the murderer, Uncle Silas groans out that he is the guilty man. They are all stunned, but they insist that Uncle Silas must be innocent. Just then the sheriff arrives and by the authority of the State of Arkansaw arrests Uncle Silas for the murder of Jubiter Dunlap.

TOM SAWYER, DETECTIVE: *Conclusion*

by MARK TWAIN

IT WAS AWFUL. AUNT SALLY AND Benny flung themselves at uncle Silas, crying, and hugged him and hung to him, and aunt Sally said go away, she wouldn't ever give him up, they shouldn't have him, and other people they come crowding and crying to the door, and — well, I couldn't stand it; it was enough to break a person's heart; so I got out.

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They took him up to the little one-horse jail in the village, and we all went along to tell him goodbye; and Tom was feeling elegant, and says to me, "We'll have a most noble good time and heaps of danger some dark night getting him out of there, Huck, and it'll be talked about everywheres and we will be celebrated"; but the old man busted that scheme up the minute he whispered to him about it. He said no, it was his duty to stand whatever the law done to him, and he would stick to the jail plumb through to the end, even if there warn't no door to it. It disappointed Tom and graveled him a good deal, but he had to put up with it.

But he felt responsible and bound to get his uncle Silas free; and he told aunt Sally, the last thing, not to worry, because he was going to turn in and work night and day and beat this game and fetch uncle Silas out innocent; and she was very loving to him and thanked him and said she knowed he would do his very best. And she told us to help Benny take care of the house and the children, and then we had a goodbye cry all around and went back to the farm, and left her there to live with the jailer's wife a month till the trial in October.

Well, that was a hard month on us all. Poor Benny, she kept up the best she could, and me and Tom tried to keep things cheerful there at the house, but it kind of went for nothing, as you may say. It was the same up at the jail. We went up every day to see the old people, but it was awful dreary, because the old man warn't sleeping much, and was walking in his sleep considerable, and so he got to looking fagged and miserable, and his mind got shaky, and we all got afraid his troubles would break him down and kill him. And whenever we tried to persuade him to feel cheerfuler, he only shook his head and said if we only knowed what it was to carry around a murderer's load on your heart we wouldn't talk that way. Tom and all of us kept telling him it *wasn't* murder, but just accidental killing, but it never made any difference — it was murder, and he wouldn't have it any other way. He actu'ly begun to come out plain and square towards trial-time and acknowledge that he *tried* to kill the man. Why, that was awful, you know. It made things seem fifty times as dreadful, and there warn't no more comfort for aunt Sally and Benny. But he promised he wouldn't say a word about his murder when others was around, and we was glad of that.

Tom Sawyer racked the head off of himself all that month trying to plan some way out for uncle Silas, and many's the night he kept me up 'most all night with this kind of tiresome work, but he couldn't seem to get on the right track no way. As for me, I reckoned a body might as well give it up, it all looked so blue and I was so downhearted; but he wouldn't. He stuck to the business right along, and went on planning

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and thinking and ransacking his head.

So at last the trial come on, towards the middle of October, and we was all in the court. The place was jammed, of course. Poor old uncle Silas, he looked more like a dead person than a live one, his eyes was so hollow and he looked so thin and so mournful. Benny she set on one side of him and aunt Sally on the other, and they had veils on, and was full of trouble. But Tom he set by our lawyer, and had his finger in everywheres, of course. The lawyer let him, and the judge let him. He 'most took the business out of the lawyer's hands sometimes; which was well enough, because that was only a mud-turtle of a back-settlement lawyer and didn't know enough to come in when it rains, as the saying is.

They swore in the jury, and then the lawyer for the prostitution got up and begun. He made a terrible speech against the old man, that made him moan and groan, and made Benny and aunt Sally cry. The way *he* told about the murder kind of knocked us all stupid, it was so different from the old man's tale. He said he was going to prove that uncle Silas was *seen* to kill Jubiter Dunlap by two good witnesses, and done it deliberate, and *said* he was going to kill him the very minute he hit him with the club; and they seen him hide Jubiter in the bushes, and they seen that Jubiter was stone-dead. And said uncle Silas come later and lugged Jubiter down into the tobacker-field, and two men seen him do it. And said uncle Silas turned out, away in the night, and buried Jubiter, and a man seen him at it.

I says to myself, poor old uncle Silas has been lying about it because he reckoned nobody seen him and he couldn't bear to break aunt Sally's heart and Benny's; and right he was. As for me, I would 'a' lied the same way, and so would anybody that had any feeling, to save them such misery and sorrow which *they* warn't no ways responsible for. Well, it made our lawyer look pretty sick; and it knocked Tom silly, too, for a little spell, but then he braced up and let on that he warn't worried — but I knowed he *was*, all the same. And the people — my, but it made a stir amongst them!

And when that lawyer was done telling the jury what he was going to prove, he set down and begun to work his witnesses.

First, he called a lot of them to show that there was bad blood betwixt uncle Silas and the diseased; and they told how they had heard uncle Silas threaten the diseased, at one time and another, and how it got worse and worse and everybody was talking about it, how the diseased got afraid of his life, and told two or three of them he was certain uncle Silas would up and kill him some time or another.

Tom and our lawyer asked them some questions; but it warn't no use, they stuck to what they said.

Next, they called up Lem Beebe, and he took the stand. It come into my mind, then, how Lem and Jim Lane had come along talking, that

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time, about borrowing a dog or something from Jubiter Dunlap; and that brought up the blackberries and the lantern; and that brought up Bill and Jack Withers, and how *they* passed by, talking about someone stealing uncle Silas's corn; and that fetched up our old ghost that come along about the same time and scared us so — and here *he* was too, and a privileged character, on accounts of his being deef and dumb and a stranger, and they had fixed him a chair inside the railing, where he could cross his legs and be comfortable, whilst the other people was all in a jam so they couldn't hardly breathe. So it all come back to me just the way it was that day; and it made me mournful to think how pleasant it was up to then, and how miserable ever since.

Lem Beebe, sworn, said: "I was a-coming along, that day, second of September, and Jim Lane was with me, and it was towards sundown, and we heard loud talk, like quarreling, and we was very close, only the hazel bushes between (that's along the fence); and we heard a voice say, 'I've told you more'n once I'd kill you,' and knowed it was this prisoner's voice; and then we see a club come up above the bushes and down out of sight again, and heard a smashing thump and then a groan or two; and then we crope soft to where we could see, and there laid Jupiter Dunlap dead, and this prisoner standing over him with the club; and the next he hauled the dead man into a clump of bushes and hid him, and then we stooped low, to be out of sight, and got away fast as we could get movin'."

Well, it was awful. It kind of froze everybody's blood to hear it, and the house was 'most as still whilst he was telling it as if there warn't nobody in it. And when he was done, you could hear them gasp and sigh, all over the house, and look at one another the same as to say, "Ain't it perfectly terrible — ain't it awful!"

Now happened a thing that astonished me. All the time the first witnesses was proving the bad blood and the threats and all that, Tom Sawyer was alive and laying for them; and the minute they was through, he went for them, and done his level best to catch them in lies and spile their testimony. But now, how different. When Lem first begun to talk, and never said anything about speaking to Jubiter, or trying to borrow a dog off of him, he was all alive and laying for Lem, and you could see he was getting ready to cross-question him to death pretty soon, and then I judged him and me would go on the stand by and by and tell what we heard him and Jim Lane say. But the next time I looked at Tom I got the cold shivers. Why, he was in the brownest study you ever see — miles and miles away. He warn't hearing a word Lem Beebe was saying; and when he got through he was still in that brown study, just the same. Our

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lawyer joggled him, and then he looked up startled, and says, "Take the witness if you want him. Lemme alone — I want to think."

Well, that beat me. I couldn't understand it. And Benny and her mother — oh, they looked sick, they was so troubled. They shoved their veils to one side and tried to get his eye, but it warn't any use, and I couldn't get his eye either. So the mud-turtle he tackled the witness, but it didn't amount to nothing; and he made a mess of it.

Then they called up Jim Lane, and he told the very same story over again, exact. Tom never listened to this one at all, but set there thinking and thinking, miles and miles away. So the mud-turtle went in alone again and come out just as flat as he done before. The lawyer for the prostitution looked very comfortable, but the judge looked disgusted. You see, Tom was just the same as a regular lawyer, nearly, because it was Arkansaw law for a prisoner to choose anybody he wanted to help his lawyer, and Tom had had uncle Silas shove him into the case, and now he was botching it and you could see the judge didn't like it much.

All that the mud-turtle got out of Lem and Jim was this: he asked them:

"Why didn't you go and tell what you saw?"

"We was afraid we would get mixed up in it ourselves. And we was just starting down the river a-hunting for all the week besides; but as soon as we come back we found out they'd been searching for the body, so then we went and told Brace Dunlap all about it."

"When was that?"

"Saturday night, September 9th."

The judge he spoke up and says:

"Mr. Sheriff, arrest these two witnesses on suspicions of being accessionary after the fact to the murder."

The lawyer for the prostitution jumps up all excited, and says:

"Your honor! I protest against this extraordi —"

"Set down!" says the judge, pulling his bowie and laying it on his pulpit. "I beg you to respect the Court."

So he done it. Then he called Bill Withers.

> *Bill Withers*, sworn, said: "I was coming along about sundown, Saturday, September 2d, by the prisoner's field, and my brother Jack was with me, and we seen a man toting off something heavy on his back and allowed it was someone stealing corn; we couldn't see distinct; next we made out that it was one man carrying another; and the way it hung, so kind of limp, we judged it was somebody that was drunk; and by the man's walk we said it was Parson Silas, and we judged he had found Sam Cooper drunk in the road, which he was always trying to reform him, and was toting him out of danger."

It made the people shiver to think of poor old uncle Silas toting off the diseased down to the place in his

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tobacker-field where the dog dug up the body, but there warn't much sympathy around amongst the faces, and I heard one cuss say, "'Tis the coldest-blooded work I ever struck, lugging a murdered man around like that, and going to bury him like a' animal, and him a preacher at that."

Tom he went on thinking, and never took no notice; so our lawyer took the witness and done the best he could, and it was plenty poor enough.

Then Jack Withers he come on the stand and told the same tale, just like Bill done.

And after him comes Brace Dunlap, and he was looking very mournful, and most crying; and there was a rustle and a stir all around, and everybody got ready to listen, and lots of the women folks said, "Poor cretur, poor cretur," and you could see a many of them wiping away at their eyes.

Brace Dunlap, sworn, said: "I was in considerable trouble a long time about my poor brother, but I reckoned things warn't near so bad as he made out, and I couldn't make myself believe anybody would have the heart to hurt a poor harmless cretur like that" — [by jings, I was sure I seen Tom give a kind of a faint little start, and then look disappointed again] — "and you know I *couldn't* think a preacher would hurt him — it warn't natural to think such an onlikely thing — so I never paid much attention, and now I sha'n't ever, ever forgive myself; for if I had 'a' done different, my poor brother would be with me this day, and not laying yonder murdered, and him so harmless." He kind of broke down there and choked up, and waited to get his voice; and people all around said the most pitiful things, and women cried; and it was very still in there, and solemn, and old uncle Silas, poor thing, he give a groan right out so everybody heard him. Then Brace he went on, "Saturday, September 2d, he didn't come home to supper. By and by I got a little uneasy, and one of my men went over to this prisoner's place, but come back and said he warn't there. So I got uneasier and uneasier, and couldn't rest. I went to bed, but I couldn't sleep; and turned out, away late in the night, and went wandering over to this prisoner's place and all around about there a good while, hoping I would run across my poor brother, and never knowing he was out of his troubles and gone to a better shore —" So he broke down and choked up again, and most all the women was crying now. Pretty soon he got another start and says: "But it warn't no use; so at last I went home and tried to get some sleep, but couldn't. Well, in a day or two everybody was uneasy, and they got to talking about this prisoner's threats, and took to the idea, which I didn't take no stock in, that my brother was murdered; so they hunted around and tried to find his

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body, but couldn't and give it up. And so I reckoned he was gone off somers to have a little peace, and would come back to us when his troubles was kind of healed. But late Saturday night, the 9th, Lem Beebe and Jim Lane come to my house and told me all — told me the whole awful 'sassination, and my heart was broke. And *then* I remembered something that hadn't took no hold of me at the time, because reports said this prisoner had took to walking in his sleep and doing all kind of things of no consequence, not knowing what he was about. I will tell you what that thing was that come back into my memory. Away late that awful Saturday night when I was wandering around about this prisoner's place, grieving and troubled, I was down by the corner of the tobacker-field and I heard a sound like digging in a gritty soil; and I crope nearer and peeped through the vines that hung on the rail fence and seen this prisoner *shoveling* — shoveling with a long-handled shovel — heaving earth into a big hole that was most filled up; his back was to me, but it was bright moonlight and I knowed him by his old green baize work-gown with a splattery white patch in the middle of the back like somebody had hit him with a snowball. *He was burying the man he'd murdered!*"

And he slumped down in his chair crying and sobbing, and 'most everybody in the house busted out wailing, and crying, and saying, "Oh, it's awful — awful — horrible!" and there was a most tremendous excitement, and you couldn't hear yourself think; and right in the midst of it up jumps old uncle Silas, white as a sheet, and sings out:

"*It's true, every word — I murdered him in cold blood!*"

By Jackson, it petrified them! People rose up wild all over the house, straining and staring for a better look at him, and the judge was hammering with his mallet and the sheriff yelling "Order — order in the court — order!"

And all the while the old man stood there a-quaking and his eyes a-burning, and not looking at his wife and daughter, which was clinging to him and begging him to keep still, but pawing them off with his hands and saying he *would* clear his black soul from crime, he *would* heave off this load that was more than he could bear, and he *wouldn't* bear it another hour! And then he raged right along with his awful tale, everybody a-staring and gasping, judge, jury, lawyers, and everybody, and Benny and aunt Sally crying their hearts out. And by George, Tom Sawyer never looked at him once! Never once — just set there gazing with all his eyes at something else, I couldn't tell what. And so the old man raged right along, pouring his words out like a stream of fire:

"I killed him! I am guilty! But I never had the notion in my life to

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hurt him or harm him, spite of all them lies about my threatening him, till the very minute I raised the club — then my heart went cold! — then the pity all went out of it, and I struck to kill! In that one moment all my wrongs come into my mind; all the insults that that man and the scoundrel his brother, there, had put upon me, and how they laid in together to ruin me with the people, and take away my good name, and *drive* me to some deed that would destroy me and my family that hadn't ever done *them* no harm, so help me God! And they done it in a mean revenge — for why? Because my innocent pure girl here at my side wouldn't marry that rich, insolent, ignorant coward, Brace Dunlap, who's been sniveling here over a brother he never cared a brass farthing for" — [I see Tom give a jump and look glad *this* time, to a dead certainty] — "and in that moment I've told you about, I forgot my God and remembered only my heart's bitterness, God forgive me, and I struck to kill. In one second I was miserably sorry — oh, filled with remorse; but I thought of my poor family, and I *must* hide what I'd done for their sakes; and I did hide that corpse in the bushes; and presently I carried it to the tobacker-field; and in the deep night I went with my shovel and buried it where —"

Up jumps Tom and shouts:

"*Now*, I've got it!" and waves his hand, oh, ever so fine and starchy, towards the old man, and says:

"Set down! A murder *was* done, but you never had no hand in it!"

Well, sir, you could 'a' heard a pin drop. And the old man he sunk down kind of bewildered in his seat, and aunt Sally and Benny didn't know it, because they was so astonished and staring at Tom with their mouths open and not knowing what they was about. And the whole house the same. *I* never seen people look so helpless and tangled up, and I hain't ever seen eyes bug out and gaze without a blink the way theirn did. Tom says, perfectly ca'm:

"Your Honor, may I speak?"

"For God's sake, yes — go on!" says the judge, so astonished and mixed up he didn't know what he was about hardly.

Then Tom he stood there and waited a second or two — that was for to work up an "effect," as he calls it — then he started in just as ca'm as ever, and says:

"For about two weeks now there's been a little bill sticking on the front of this courthouse offering two thousand dollars reward for a couple of big di'monds — stole at St. Louis. Them di'monds is worth twelve thousand dollars. But never mind about that till I get to it. Now about this murder. I will tell you all about it — how it happened — who done — every *de*tail."

You could see everybody nestle now, and begin to listen for all they was worth.

"This man here, Brace Dunlap, that's been sniveling so about his dead brother that *you* know he never

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cared a straw for, wanted to marry that young girl there, and she wouldn't have him. So he told uncle Silas he would make him sorry. Uncle Silas knowed how powerful he was, and how little chance he had against such a man, and he was scared and worried, and done everything he could think of to smooth him over and get him to be good to him: he even took his no-account brother Jubiter on the farm and give him wages and stinted his own family to pay them; and Jubiter done everything his brother could contrive to insult uncle Silas, and fret and worry him, and try to drive uncle Silas into doing him a hurt, so as to injure uncle Silas with the people. And it done it. Everybody turned against him and said the meanest kind of things about him, and it gradu'ly broke his heart — yes, and he was so worried and distressed that often he warn't hardly in his right mind.

"Well, on that Saturday that we've had so much trouble about, two of these witnesses here, Lem Beebe and Jim Lane, come along by where uncle Silas and Jubiter Dunlap was at work — and that much of what they've said is true, the rest is lies. They didn't hear uncle Silas say he would kill Jubiter; they didn't hear no blow struck; they didn't see no dead man, and they didn't see uncle Silas hide anything in the bushes. Look at them now — how they set there, wishing they hadn't been so handy with their tongues; anyway, they'll wish it before I get done.

"That same Saturday evening Bill and Jack Withers *did* see one man lugging off another one. That much of what they said is true, and the rest is lies. First off they thought it was someone stealing uncle Silas's corn — you notice it makes them look silly, now, to find out somebody overheard them say that. That's because they found out by and by who it was that was doing the lugging, and *they* know best why they swore here that they took it for uncle Silas by the gait — which it *wasn't*, and they knowed it when they swore to that lie.

"A man out in the moonlight *did* see a murdered person put under ground in the tobacker-field — but it wasn't uncle Silas that done the burying. He was in his bed at that very time.

"Now, then, before I go on, I want to ask you if you've ever noticed this: that people, when they're thinking deep, or when they're worried, are most always doing something with their hands, and they don't know it, and don't notice what it is their hands are doing. Some stroke their chins; some stroke their noses; some stroke up *under* their chin with their hand; some twirl a chain, some fumble a button, then there's some that draws a figure or a letter with their finger on their cheek, or under their chin or on their under lip. That's *my* way. When I'm restless, or worried, or thinking hard, I draw capital V's on my cheek or on my under lip or under my chin, and never anything *but* capital V's — and half the time I don't notice it and don't know I'm doing it."

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That was odd. That is just what I do; only I make an O. And I could see people nodding to one another, same as when they mean "*That's* so."

"Now, then, I'll go on. That same Saturday — no, it was the night before — there was a steamboat laying at Flagler's Landing, forty miles above here, and it was raining and storming like the nation. And there was a thief aboard, and he had them two big di'monds that's advertised out here on this courthouse door; and he slipped ashore with his handbag and struck out into the dark and the storm, and he was a-hoping he could get to this town all right and be safe. But he had two pals aboard the boat, hiding, and he knowed they was going to kill him the first chance they got and take the di'monds; because all three stole them, and then this fellow he got hold of them and skipped.

"Well, he hadn't been gone more'n ten minutes before his pals found it out, and they jumped ashore and lit out after him. Prob'ly they burned matches and found his tracks. Anyway, they dogged along after him all day Saturday and kept out of his sight; and towards sundown he come to the bunch of sycamores down by uncle Silas's field, and he went in there to get a disguise out of his handbag and put it on before he showed himself here in the town — and mind you he done that just a little after the time that uncle Silas was hitting Jubiter Dunlap over the head with a club — for he *did* hit him.

"But the minute the pals see that thief slide into the bunch of sycamores, they jumped out of the bushes and slid in after him.

"They fell on him and clubbed him to death.

"Yes, for all he screamed and howled so, they never had no mercy on him, but clubbed him to death. And two men that was running along the road heard him yelling that way, and they made a rush into the sycamore bunch — which was where they was bound for, anyway — and when the pals saw them they lit out and the two new men after them a-chasing them as tight as they could go. But only a minute or two — then these two new men slipped back very quiet into the sycamores.

"*Then* what did they do? I will tell you what they done. They found where the thief had got his disguise out of his carpet-sack to put on; so one of them strips and puts on that disguise."

Tom waited a little here, for some more "effect" — then he says, very deliberate:

"The man that put on that dead man's disguise was — *Jubiter Dunlap!*"

"Great Scott!" everybody shouted, all over the house, and old uncle Silas he looked perfectly astonished.

"Yes, it was Jubiter Dunlap. Not dead, you see. Then they pulled off the dead man's boots and put Jubiter Dunlap's old ragged shoes on the corpse and put the corpse's boots on Jubiter Dunlap. Then Jubiter Dunlap stayed where he was, and the other

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man lugged the dead body off in the twilight; and after midnight he went to uncle Silas's house, and took his old green work-robe off of the peg where it always hangs in the passage betwixt the house and the kitchen, and put it on, and stole the long-handled shovel and went off down into the tobacker-field and buried the murdered man."

He stopped, and stood half a minute. Then —

"And who do you reckon the murdered man *was?* It was — *Jake* Dunlap, the long-lost burglar!"

"Great Scott!"

Tom went on:

"And the man that buried him was — *Brace* Dunlap, his brother!"

"Great Scott!"

And then Tom said:

"And who do you reckon is this mowing idiot here that's letting on all these weeks to be a deef and dumb stranger? It's — *Jubiter* Dunlap!"

My land, they all busted out in a howl, and you never see the like of that excitement since the day you was born. And Tom he made a jump for Jubiter and snaked off his goggles and his false whiskers, and there was the murdered man, sure enough, just as alive as anybody! And aunt Sally and Benny they went to hugging and crying and kissing and smothering old uncle Silas to that degree he was more muddled and confused and mushed up in his mind than he ever was before, and that is saying considerable. And next, people begun to yell:

"Tom Sawyer! Tom Sawyer! Shut up everybody, and let him go on! Go on, Tom Sawyer!"

Which made him feel uncommon bully, for it was nuts for Tom Sawyer to be a public character that-away, and a hero, as he calls it. So when it was all quiet, he says:

"There ain't much left, only this. When that man there, Brace Dunlap, had most worried the life and sense out of uncle Silas till at last he plumb lost his mind and hit this other blatherskite, his brother, with a club, I reckon he seen his chance. Jubiter broke for the woods to hide, and I reckon the game was for him to slide out, in the night, and leave the country. Then Brace would make everybody believe uncle Silas killed him and hid his body somers; and that would ruin uncle Silas and drive *him* out of the country — hang him, maybe; I dunno. But when they found their dead brother in the sycamores without knowing him, because he was so battered up, they see they had a better thing: disguise *both* and bury Jake and dig him up presently all dressed up in Jubiter's clothes, and hire Jim Lane and Bill Withers and the others to swear to some handy lies — which they done. And there they set, now, and I told them they would be looking sick before I got done, and that is the way they're looking now.

"Well, me and Huck Finn here, we come down on the boat with the thieves, and the dead one told us all about the di'monds, and said the

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others would murder him if they got the chance; and we was going to help him all we could. We was bound for the sycamores when we heard them killing him in there; but we was in there in the early morning after the storm and allowed nobody hadn't been killed, after all. And when we see Jubiter Dunlap here spreading around in the very same disguise Jake told us *he* was going to wear, we thought it was Jake his own self — and he was goo-gooing deef and dumb, and *that* was according to agreement.

"Well, me and Huck went on hunting for the corpse after the others quit and we found it. And was proud, too; but uncle Silas he knocked us crazy by telling us *he* killed the man. So we was mighty sorry we found the body, and was bound to save uncle Silas's neck if we could; and it was going to be tough work, too, because he wouldn't let us break him out of prison the way we done with our old friend Jim.

"I done everything I could the whole month to think up some way to save uncle Silas, but I couldn't strike a thing. So when we come into court today I come empty, and couldn't see no chance anywheres. But by and by I had a glimpse of something that set me thinking — just a little wee glimpse — only that, and not enough to make sure; but it set me thinking hard — and *watching*, when I was only letting on to think; and by and by, sure enough, when uncle Silas was piling out that stuff about *him* killing Jubiter Dunlap, I catched that glimpse again, and this time I jumped up and shut down the proceedings, because I *knowed* Jubiter Dunlap was a-setting here before me. I knowed him by a thing which I seen him do — and I remembered it. I'd seen him do it when I was here a year ago."

He stopped then, and studied a minute — laying for an "effect" — I knowed it perfectly well. Then he turned off like he was going to leave the platform, and says, kind of lazy and indifferent:

"Well, I believe that is all."

Why, you never heard such a howl! — and it come from the whole house:

"What *was* it you seen him do? Stay where you are, you little devil! You think you are going to work a body up till his mouth's a-watering and stop there? What *was* it he done?"

That was it, you see — he just done it to get an "effect"; you couldn't 'a' pulled him off of that platform with a yoke of oxen.

"Oh, it wasn't anything much," he says. "I seen him looking a little excited when he found uncle Silas was actu'ly fixing to hang himself for a murder that warn't ever done; and he got more and more nervous and worried, I a-watching him sharp but not seeming to look at him — and all of a sudden his hands begun to work and fidget, and pretty soon his left crept up and *his finger drawed a cross on his cheek*, and then I *had* him!"

Well, then they ripped and howled and stomped and clapped their hands till Tom Sawyer was that proud and

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happy he didn't know what to do with himself.

And then the judge he looked down over his pulpit and says:

"My boy, did you *see* all the various details of this strange conspiracy and tragedy that you've been describing?"

"No, your Honor, I didn't see any of them."

"Didn't see any of them! Why, you've told the whole history straight through, just the same as if you'd seen it with your eyes. How did you manage that?"

Tom says, kind of easy and comfortable:

"Oh, just noticing the evidence and piecing this and that together, your Honor; just an ordinary little bit of detective work; anybody could 'a' done it."

"Nothing of the kind! Not two in a million could 'a' done it. You are a very remarkable boy."

Then they let go and give Tom another smashing round, and he — well, he wouldn't 'a' sold out for a silver mine. Then the judge says:

"But are you certain you've got this curious history straight?"

"Perfectly, your honor. Here is Brace Dunlap — let him deny his share of it if he wants to take the chance; I'll engage to make him wish he hadn't said anything. . . . Well, you see *he's* pretty quiet. And his brother's pretty quiet, and them four witnesses that lied so and got paid for it, they're pretty quiet. And as for uncle Silas, it ain't any use for him to put in his oar, I wouldn't believe him under oath!"

Well, sir, that fairly made them shout; and even the judge he let go and laughed. Tom he was just feeling like a rainbow. When they was done laughing he looks up at the judge and says:

"Your Honor, there's a thief in this house."

"A thief?"

"Yes, sir. And he's got them twelve-thousand-dollar di'monds on him."

By gracious, but it made a stir! Everybody went shouting:

"Which is him? P'int him out!"

And the judge says: "Point him out, my lad. Sheriff, you will arrest him. Which one is it?"

Tom says: "This late dead man here — Jubiter Dunlap."

Then there was another thundering let-go of astonishment and excitement; but Jubiter, which was astonished enough before, was just fairly putrified with astonishment this time. And he spoke up, about half crying, and says:

"Now *that's* a lie. Your Honor, it ain't fair; I'm plenty bad enough without that. I done the other things — Brace he put me up to it, and persuaded me, and promised he'd make me rich, some day, and I done it, and I'm sorry I done it, and I wisht I hadn't; but I hain't stole no di'monds, and I hain't *got* no di'monds; I wisht I may never stir if it ain't so. The sheriff can search me and see."

Tom says: "Your Honor, it wasn't

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right to call him a thief, and I'll let up on that a little. He did steal the di'monds, but he didn't know it. He stole them from his brother Jake when he was laying dead, after Jake had stole them from the other thieves; but Jubiter didn't know he was stealing them; and he's been swelling around here with them a month; yes, sir, twelve thousand dollars' worth of di'monds on him — all that riches, and going around here every day just like a poor man. Yes, your Honor, he's got them on him now."

The judge spoke up and says: "Search him, Sheriff."

Well, sir, the sheriff he ransacked him high and low, and everywhere: searched his hat, socks, seams, boots, everything — and Tom he stood there quiet, laying for another of them effects of hisn. Finally the sheriff he give it up, and everybody looked disappointed, and Jubiter says:

"There, now! what'd I tell you?"

And the judge says: "It appears you were mistaken this time, my boy."

Then Tom took an attitude and let on to be studying with all his might, and scratching his head. Then all of a sudden he glanced up chipper, and says:

"Oh, now I've got it! I'd forgot."

Which was a lie, and I knowed it. Then he says:

"Will somebody be good enough to lend me a little screwdriver? There was one in your brother's handbag that you smouched, Jubiter, but I reckon you didn't fetch it with you."

"No, I didn't. I didn't want it, and I give it away."

"That was because you didn't know what it was for."

Jubiter had his boots on again, by now, and when the thing Tom wanted was passed over the people's heads till it got to him, he says to Jubiter:

"Put up your foot on this chair." And he kneeled down and begun to unscrew the heel-plate, everybody watching; and when he got that big di'mond out of that boot-heel and held it up and let it flash and blaze and squirt sunlight everwhichaway, it just took everybody's breath; and Jubiter he looked so sick and sorry you never see the like of it. And when Tom held up the other di'mond he looked sorrier than ever. Land! he was thinking how he would 'a' skipped out and been rich and independent in a foreign land if he'd only had the luck to guess what the screwdriver was in the carpet-bag for.

Well, it was a most exciting time, take it all around, and Tom got cords of glory. The judge took the di'monds, and stood up in his pulpit, and cleared his throat, and shoved his spectacles back on his head, and says:

"I'll keep them and notify the owners; and when they send for them it will be a real pleasure to me to hand you the two thousand dollars, for you've earned the money — yes, and you've earned the deepest and most sincerest thanks of this community besides, for lifting a wronged and innocent family out of ruin and shame, and saving a good and honor-

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able man from a felon's death, and for exposing to infamy and the punishment of the law a cruel and odious scoundrel and his miserable creatures!"

Well, sir, if there'd been a brass band to bust out some music, then, it would 'a' been just the perfectest thing I ever see, and Tom Sawyer he said the same.

Then the sheriff he nabbed Brace Dunlap and his crowd, and by and by next month the judge had them up for trial and jailed the whole lot. And everybody crowded back to uncle Silas's little old church, and was ever so loving and kind to him and the family and couldn't do enough for them; and uncle Silas he preached them the blamedest jumbledest idiotic sermons you ever struck, and would tangle you up so you couldn't find your way home in daylight; but the people never let on but what they thought it was the clearest and brightest and elegantest sermons that ever was; and they would set there and cry, for love and pity; but, by George, they give me the jimjams and the fantods and caked up what brains I had, and turned them solid; but by and by they loved the old man's intellects back into him again, and he was as sound in his skull as ever he was, which ain't no flattery, I reckon. And so the whole family was as happy as birds, and nobody could be gratefuler and lovinger than what they was to Tom Sawyer; and the same to me, though I hadn't done nothing. And when the two thousand dollars come, Tom give half of it to me, and never told anybody so, which didn't surprise me — I knowed him.

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TWO OF A KIND

by LAURENCE KIRK

I HAD NEVER KNOWN WATT GERRARD; but I had met Greet Harson when he was at the height of his popularity. That, of course, was after his return from the famous expedition. As for the former, he was evidently one of these ardent, restless young men who are in a great hurry to achieve undying fame. Journalism was his trade, but he wasn't prepared to go through the slow machinery of the mill. He had realized that in this present-day world it wasn't enough to have one's job at one's fingers' ends. There were thousands who had that. To succeed it was necessary to have attracted attention for something quite different; to have flown non-stop to the Cape, for instance, or to have sat on a pole for 100 days; to have been born a Viscount or become a Dean, to have ridden the winner of the National, to have married more than two film stars, or even to have committed a murder and been acquitted. No doubt Gerrard considered all these ways of achieving his end; but he really wanted fame, not notoriety, and finally, like others before him, he decided to plunge into the interior of Brazil and discover what happened to Colonel Fawcett.

No doubt this would have been as successful as any other method if he had come back to tell the tale. But he didn't. The tragedy was that after he had been given up for lost, people still went on wondering what had happened to Fawcett, but they hardly remembered Watt Gerrard at all

However, there was one person who did, and that was Greet Harson. It is very hard to give an accurate picture of Harson, for nobody knows how much of him was mountebank and how much genuine. He certainly never let you forget for one second that he was the well-known explorer. His normal dress in London was khaki riding-breeches, a Norfolk jacket, and an enormous sombrero hat, and he always looked as if he had just returned from an expedition even when he had been staying at the Ritz for months. Again, he was known among his irreverent colleagues as "Superlative Harson." His experiences were never unique: they were the most unique, the most sensational in the history of the world. And yet, even allowing for the superlatives, he had made some astonishing journeys in the Congo and Tibet; and even allowing for his staggering egotism, he had done some remarkably generous things. Thus it isn't easy to say what decided him to go out and look for Gerrard. It is quite possible that he really thought there was still a chance of saving the young inexperienced adventurer, or again it may merely have been that he scented a good story.

Anyway he went.

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His expedition, of course, was far better equipped than poor young Gerrard's, and it started in a blaze of publicity. For a month or so there were regular reports as to his progress; then the news became more scanty and finally there was silence. The silence continued for nearly six months and it seemed that the Brazilian forests had swallowed up yet another brave man; but then suddenly one night in the Stop Press came the news — WATT GERRARD FOUND ALIVE — and underneath it in smaller letters — HEROIC SACRIFICE TO SAVE EXPEDITION.

That was all the news that came through at first and we were left in the dark as to whose sacrifice it was that had saved the situation. But then at last the whole amazing story came through in a long cable from Harson himself. After months of following false trails, of fevers, of swamps, of attacks by hostile tribes, the rescue party had eventually seemed to be on the right track. They were then on the outskirts of a country inhabited by the savage Kunaka tribe, and rumor had it that there was a white man held there as a prisoner. Harson's party was far too few in number to risk a direct attack, and one moonlit night he crept forward alone to the chief's village to see what he could find. Some ceremony was evidently in progress, for all the natives were gathered round in front of the chief's hut; and there in the midst of them, as though he were the high priest, was the bearded figure of Watt Gerrard solemnly tapping at his typewriter.

It must have been an astonishing sight, and it lost nothing in the telling in Greet Harson's hands. Apparently it was the typewriter that had saved Gerrard's life. The natives had decided that it was some marvelous instrument of sorcery, and they had kept him, half-prisoner, half-priest, to tap out messages to their gods. But, of course, Harson didn't know all this till afterwards. All he saw then was Gerrard surrounded by these hundreds of bloodthirsty nudists, and he slowly crawled back to his own camp, wondering how it was ever going to be possible to rescue him.

On the face of it there wasn't a chance. But it happened that at that time the Kunaka were at war with their neighbors. The next time he went to reconnoitre, there were great preparations in the village, and the next after that there were only old men left in the compound. Harson still waited 48 hours longer, so that the warriors would be too far away to come hurrying back, and then in broad daylight he swooped down on the village and stole Gerrard and his typewriter from them.

It was a magnificent piece of work, and all might have been well if only they had left the typewriter behind. They knew they were being pursued as they hurried back through the jungles to safety. What was worse, their carriers knew it too; and finally one night, when they were only three days' journey from a Government

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post, they all deserted except two half-breeds. The next morning Harson discovered that they were surrounded by their pursuers. The position was quite hopeless. There was nothing to be said, nothing to be done. They just had to wait for the end, and make it costly.

All through that appalling journey they had always slept in turns, and that afternoon Harson lay down to snatch some sleep while Gerrard kept watch. When he woke up, there was no sign of Gerrard. Harson rushed out of the tent and was just in time to see him walking slowly into the forest with the typewriter in his right hand. He shouted to him to come back, but Gerrard calmly and slowly walked on. Finally Harson ran after him, but a bullet through the top of his left arm knocked him out.

The next day the deserting carriers returned. The pursuers had vanished. They found Gerrard tied to a tree with a spear wound through his heart. The typewriter had disappeared.

That, briefly, was the story. In Greet Harson's hand it became an epic. He used far fewer superlatives than usual. It was really well done, a moving and sincere account, and even those of us who didn't like Harson much had to admit that he had given the younger explorer his due. Gerrard, not Harson, was the hero of the story; and if it was really to attain undying fame that he had first set out for Brazil, he had now certainly achieved it and entirely thanks to Greet Harson.

Not that Harson didn't have his own reward. If Gerrard had become an immortal hero, Harson was now the lion of the moment, and a very live one at that. Duchesses asked him to lunch: newspapers offered him enormous contracts: people stopped and stared as he walked down Piccadilly in his sombrero hat.

One day I was taken to a cocktail party in his suite at the Ritz. I was on the outskirts of the admiring crowd as he held forth on Gerrard's heroism. It was not merely to save other lives, he admitted, that Gerrard had sacrificed himself: it was to save the record of their journey, to make sure that all they had learned and seen should not be lost to posterity; and he now considered it his sacred duty to see that Gerrard's sacrifice was not in vain.

Some minutes after this I found myself staring at a khaki jacket, which was spread out on the wall like a picture. There were two little black holes at the top of the left shoulder.

"Yes." I heard Harson's loud voice behind me. "That was the coat I was wearing. And here"—he picked something out of the pocket of the jacket—"here's the bullet. Dug it out of a tree behind me."

"A pretty close shave!" I murmured.

"Oh, I've had closer," he said airily.

"And have you really obtained much information about the customs of these tribes?" I asked him.

"Masses of it!" he answered greed-

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ily. "The most extraordinary marriage customs. It will make a whale of a book. Look" — he opened the drawer in a desk beside me — "there are the notes. Amazing details. It will be the work of the century. Most unique. Stupendous."

I just had time to glance inside the drawer when he shut it rather quickly and turned to talk to somebody else. That was the exact moment at which I first began to have misgivings. The notes I had seen were typewritten, but there were corrections in pencil, and the corrections certainly weren't in Greet Harson's handwriting. Presumably they were Gerrard's corrections and therefore Gerrard's notes, the fruit of his long sojourn with that unknown tribe. Of course, it was perfectly natural that Harson should be in possession of Gerrard's notes. It tallied with his story. But there was something in the greedy way in which he had looked in that drawer that raised a number of queries in my mind. After all, what support was there for Harson's story? The affidavits of two half-castes. I have traveled enough to know that a very small coin might easily have supplied such an affidavit. And these notes were valuable. They represented not only money, but fame as well.

No doubt it was my own fault for having a suspicious nature, but I had a horrible picture in my mind as I left that cocktail party. It was a picture of two men in a native boat on a sluggish tropical river: there were crocodiles — no, it would be alligators in that river, and presently when one of the men was standing up leaning over the side, the other crept up behind and gave him a push: there was a cry, the flick of a tail in the water, and the boat paddled away.

This wasn't a pretty picture at all, and I wisely kept it to myself. Nearly two years later for some unknown reason I took a trip up the Amazon and found it a most uninteresting river. For some equally obscure reason I stayed a couple of weeks at Manaos when I got there. Manaos has nothing to recommend it; it is swelteringly hot, it smells, it isn't even spectacular in its dirt. However, the real reason I stayed there was that I found that the hotel was run by an old friend of mine, a Canadian called Carthew. At one time he had been my Flight-Commander in the war. An amazing person. He had collected a D.S.O. and a bar within three months and then got cashiered for the very unmilitary offense of bigamy.

Possibly it was the anxiety of having two wives that had made him retire to Manaos. Possibly he had got into some other kind of trouble. Anyway, there he was, wifeless, and he ran his hotel remarkably well. It was the one clean thing in the town. Not that that was what made it a success. A hotel in such a place depends on its bottles more than its beds, and his bar was the only one in the neighborhood where you could count on not being poisoned.

I spent quite a lot of time in the bar. It was a thirsty climate, and I en-

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joyed watching the other clients. A very queer lot they were. Collectively they might have been an unshaven league of nations, and several of them individually were a whole league of nations in themselves. I have moved in such society before and have found as a rule that among all the Portuguese, Swedes, and Italians there was generally at least one decayed Englishman with a day-old beard and a faint aroma of the old school tie.

Sure enough he turned up the very first evening at Manaos, even before I had discovered my friend Carthew. I remembered distinctly how he paused at the door, looking round in a superior fashion (he was quite the shabbiest person there), as if to ask, "Ah, anyone heah I know?" Then he caught sight of me sitting alone, waved an arm airily as though I were one of his oldest friends, and came and sat down beside me.

For the next hour and a half he did the talking and I paid for the drinks. He was a good talker, I must admit, although in his stories he was sometimes careless enough to have been in London and Pekin at the same moment. At a guess, I should say he was only 35, but he already had the dull, glassy look of the inveterate soaker, and the drink had no effect on him except to make him more dignified. He was supremely contemptuous of the other men in the bar, to whom he referred as beachcombers. Really, it was pathetic the way he seemed to have no idea of what he looked like himself, for there was a ghost of something distinguished about him which showed through his shabby clothes and unshaven chin. Obviously something deeper had gone wrong. The drink was merely a symptom.

However, I am not a missionary and I made no attempt to learn his secret. I should only have been told lies if I had. What I did was to indicate firmly but gently that the third drink was the last, and presently he got up with the same airy wave of the hand — "Well, so long, old boy, glad to have run into you" — and he drifted off to the other end of the bar.

He was there the next two nights at the same time and made his entrance in the same way. But he didn't bother me again. Obviously he knew to a nicety who was good for a drink and who wasn't. He generally picked on some newcomer, and as I watched, I couldn't help wondering why they call them beachcombers. Why not barloungers? I am quite sure he never went near the beach, but just lived for the drinks he could pick up at Carthew's hotel.

The third evening he had obviously decided that I had had time to recover, or else that Carthew had, for we were sitting together in a corner of the bar. Over he came, as jaunty as ever, but he did hesitate a second until Carthew asked him to sit down. The drinks were ordered, and out came a new flood of experiences, most of them contradicting those I had heard the previous night. He only had two drinks this time. When the sec-

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ond was finished, I distinctly saw Carthew give him a signal to go away. He showed no resentment at this. No doubt it had happened before. But he got up as though it had been he who had been treating us. "Well, must get along, old boy: so long." And he drifted off to sponge on someone else.

Carthew watched him go, then turned inquiringly to me.

"Well, what do you think of him?" he asked.

"A bit thirsty!" I said. "What's his name?"

"Marjoribanks, if he's tight enough," Carthew answered, "but he doesn't always remember it himself. The poor devil! Personally I call him the immortal beachcomber."

"Oh!" I thought of the glassy look in the man's eyes. "That isn't the adjective I'd have used."

"You think he's a goner?"

"Looks like it to me."

"Well, so he is. But he's immortal all the same. . . . Ever heard of Greet Harson?"

"Yes."

"Ever heard of Watt Gerrard?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is Watt Gerrard. Immortal."

Carthew had a good deal of the actor in him. He knew the value of a good curtain, and having dropped this on me he got up with a faint smile and walked away. He avoided me the rest of the evening and the whole of the next day simply in order to whet my appetite. Not that it needed any whetting. I was telling myself all that day that I had known the whole time there was something fishy about Greet Harson. There had been some dirty work over that expedition. But I still couldn't see why Gerrard should stay there drinking himself to death when he had the chance of showing up the other man.

The next evening Carthew came and sat down beside me at the very moment when Gerrard was making his entry. We both watched him saunter off in his search for free alcohol, then I turned quickly to Carthew.

"I say, you weren't pulling my leg?"

"No, that's him all right," he informed me.

"Was the whole story a lie then?" I went on excitedly. "Wasn't he ever captured by these Indians?"

"Sure he was," Carthew quietly answered. "The whole thing was nearly perfectly true. Harson only left out a rather important bit of it and put in something else."

"What was that bit? . . . I always knew Harson was a wrong 'un."

Carthew paused to light a fresh cigar.

"I rather think you're wrong about Harson," he went on at length. "I think he behaved quite as decently as you or I would in the circumstances. However, I'd better tell you how I came to be mixed up in it. It was before I had this hotel. I was by way of being a trader then, up country, at a place called Villajos — a stinking little hole it was too, the only important

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thing about it was that it had a telegraph office. Well, it was two or three months after Harson had got home with his story. I was sitting on the verandah one evening when suddenly this apparition emerged out of the jungle with a couple of natives behind him. You've no idea what he looked like: ten thousand times worse than he does now. Clothes in tatters. Boils. Scratches."

"And it was this same man?" I glanced down the bar.

"Yes, it was. He started to run forward as soon as he saw me, he was quite out of breath when he came up and terribly excited, and then he let loose a flood of questions at me. Where was the telegraph office? Was it open? Could he cable to London? Would I lend him the money to pay for it? . . . I answered all these questions in time, including the last, which was in the negative. He flew into a rage then. 'Don't be a fool!' he shouted. 'I've got a story worth millions. Millions, I tell you.' 'Oh, have you?' says I. 'Yes,' he says, 'you *must* lend me the money. I must cable. I'm Watt Gerrard. A story worth millions!' "

Carthew paused to order another round of drinks.

"There wasn't often any fun at Villajos," he continued, "so I played up to him for a bit. 'Oh, you're Watt Gerrard!' says I. 'Yes,' says he, 'I'll pay you back double if you lend me the money.' 'Well, that sounds grand,' says I. 'The only trouble is that you being in heaven apparently, I don't quite see what you're going to pay it back in.' That brought him up kind of short. 'In heaven?' he asked suspiciously. 'Sure,' I said, 'you're dead.' He looked kind of dazed at that, and I thought it was time to blow the gaff. 'Now come off it,' I said pretty firmly. 'You know as well as I do how Gerrard saved Harson's life and lost his own for his pains. You can't try that kind of game here!' He looked more flummoxed than ever at this, and finally I went into the house and found a paper with the whole story in it and photographs of both of them. I handed it to him. 'There,' I said. 'There's a picture of Gerrard. Recognise yourself?'

"Well, he sat down and read the paper through. And when he'd read it through once, he went back and read it through again. Then he just let the paper drop from his fingers and made a funny sound. It was the kind of sound a man makes when he's been hit in the stomach. And then he began to weep. It was pretty clear then that he was all in, and I was kind of sorry for him although he had tried to lift my money off me. Anyway, I went and got him a drink. 'Cheer up, buddy,' I said as I gave him it. 'It might have come off. You'll have better luck next time.' He managed to smile in a twisted sort of way after he'd drunk it down. 'Yes,' he said, 'better luck next time. Guess I must have lost my memory or something, thinking I was Watt Gerrard.' That was all he said. I gave him a bed, and after he had recovered I

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gave him some work to do. He wasn't a bad sort of fellow really, whoever he was."

Carthew stopped short and there was a very long pause. At last I looked at him

"Is that all?" I asked, disappointedly.

"No," he smiled. "That was the beginning. He stayed on with me, but I couldn't make him out at all. He just laughed later on when I used to twit him about the way he had tried to diddle me that first evening. Even then he was spending all his money on drink; but he had got cleaned up a bit, and I noticed there was a certain likeness to the photograph. And again there were one or two things he let drop. . . . Anyway, in the end I found myself beginning to wonder whether he wasn't Gerrard after all. He told me to forget it when I asked him straight; but even then I wasn't satisfied. So one night I got him up to the house with plenty to drink, and when he was well on I showed him a cable that I'd written out to one of the London papers. It was to say that Watt Gerrard had been found alive and was ready to sell his story to them. I suggested casually that we should go 50-50 over it. My! He came alive then all right. Flew at me like a madman, knocked me down and stood over me with a knife until I promised to forget about it. Then finally he calmed down and filled his glass, and began to tell me why."

Carthew glanced over his shoulder before he went on. He seemed to be making sure that he wasn't in danger of another attack. But the beachcomber was otherwise engaged.

"I don't blame the poor devil," he went on after a pause, "and I don't blame Harson either. However, you must judge for yourself. It was all quite true about his capture by the Indians: typewriter and everything, it was all gospel. He was there nearly eighteen months. You can imagine what he felt like, never knowing when they'd get tired of his sorcery and put his eyes out; learning all about their customs and writing it down, although he knew he'd never see another white man to tell it to. And then suddenly out of the blue comes Harson and rescues him. Just imagine his feelings! Joy. Bewilderment. Gratitude! You'd have thought a gratitude of that size would have lasted the rest of his life."

"You certainly would," I agreed.

"Well, it didn't," Carthew returned shortly. "Gratitude is a very delicate and peculiar thing. It may go sour if you even look at it. And there was plenty of time for it to go sour on that long, weary journey back to the river. Remember there were just the two of them, together all the time, never seeing another white man. And they were two of a kind, two dogs with a bone. I've been a journalist myself, among other things, and I can understand how Gerrard began to feel about it. If it had been a bag of gold they had, I suppose they could have divided it. But it wasn't a bag of gold, it was a story; and each

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thought it belonged exclusively to him. Neither of them ever came into the open about it. It was all underground. But Gerrard began to see that it wasn't just love of his fellow-creatures that had made Harson come out to find him, and he knew in his bones that Harson was far the more experienced writer. He'd steal all the thunder. He remembered too how Harson had pumped him about all he had learned in his captivity, his own story, his own claim to fame, the thing he had all but lost his life for. Oh, yes, I can understand what happened to Gerrard's gratitude. The black thing in his heart was growing and growing every day they went on through the jungle."

Carthew paused thoughtfully for a moment. He seemed to be going over in his own mind what the broken man had told him, and almost experiencing himself the secret battle which he had lost.

"My sympathies are with Gerrard," he repeated at last. "The jungle has an effect on a man. One doesn't any longer think normally. Grievances become huge, portentous things. And every night when they stopped, there was Harson tapping feverishly at his own typewriter. . . . Well, you've read the results of that. It was quite true that at the end their carriers all deserted, but they weren't in any danger then. They had been, plenty of it, but it was all over. All it meant was that they had to wait a day or two while they sent out the two men who remained to collect some more carriers for them. Supplies were low, and that afternoon they went out separately, Harson to the north and Gerrard to the south, to shoot something for the pot. If either of them got lost, he was to fire three shots as a signal. Gerrard knew then that in three or four more days the whole story would be out and all the telegraph wires buzzing. He had seen how impatient Harson was getting, felt how he was being thrust more and more into the background himself. . . . Well, he stalked him deliberately for hours until he was well away from the camp. He didn't have any opportunity for a long time, but then at last when he was only two hundred yards away, Harson stood up on a rock to look around. Gerrard told me how calm he was as he lifted up his rifle. His hands, he said, were perfectly steady. He remembered thinking how steady they were as he drew a bead on Harson's heart. Still thinking how steady they were, he fired, and Harson toppled backwards off the rock.

"After the sharp noise of the explosion there was an uncanny, unearthly silence. Gerrard wasn't steady now, he was quivering all over. He saw a vulture high up in the sky, and suddenly his nerve gave and he began to run. He ran wildly just for the sake of running, and when he pulled himself together and stopped running, he found he was lost. He fired three shots in the air, but there was no answer, no sound of any kind. There were now three vultures in the sky,

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and he started running again. Two days later, when he was nearly finished, he fell in with some Indians and they took him back up country. It was three months before he finally found his way to Villajos, and in the meantime you know what happened."

It was my turn to order drinks, and neither of us spoke again until the waiter had set down the two tall tumblers, with blocks of ice in them, on the table in front of us. I don't know what Carthew was thinking of, but I was wondering about that bullet which Harson kept in the pocket of the holed jacket. He must have known that that bullet had come from Gerrard's rifle. He must have known that Gerrard had tried to kill him. Why had he told the story he did? Was it just to heap coals of fire on the other man's head or was it something deeper?

Carthew evidently was pondering on the very same question.

"That's all I know," he suddenly said, "but there are still one or two things I wonder about. Did Harson really think Gerrard was dead? Was he just unbelievably generous, or did he know how damnably clever he was being? You see, Gerrard knew he was beaten when he read Harson's story. If Harson had told the truth, he might have gone back and made a fight for it. But as it was, Harson had given him what he really wanted: immortality. He couldn't go back after that. Apart from everything else, there was the danger that Harson knew who had fired the shot and could prove it. A nice story that would have made if it came out. No, he was beaten, and he knew it. Whether Harson was just being devilish, or whether he was really sorry for the young man and wanted to make amends, that is a question we'll never answer."

Carthew paused. I glanced at him, then looked round.

"And this is the result!" I said.

The beachcomber was then drifting a little unsteadily towards the door. The more unsteady and shabby he was, the more dignified he became. From his expression he might have been in full morning dress, coming down the steps of a London club. He gave us a condescending wave of the hand as he stepped with a sideways lurch towards the door.

"Yes, that's the result," Carthew said, and then, after a short silence, put the whole matter in a nutshell: "When you've been given immortality by a man you've tried to murder, there really isn't much left to do — except drink."

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S. R. Ross's "You Got to Have Luck" is one of the seven "first stories" which won special awards in EQMM's Seventh Annual Contest. Miss Ross's story is honest and painstaking, and in every single line she has borne in mind the author's responsibility to readers, including the particular responsibility that every detective-story writer owes to the modern form of the genre.

The author is still in her early twenties. She first began to write for her high-school magazine, but when she announced her intention of becoming a professional writer, her entire family, we are sorry to report, greeted Miss Ross's statement with hysterical laughter. In fact, her ambition became something of a standing joke, and even when Miss Ross won the English award on her graduation from high school, her family still refused to take her seriously.

But now that we are publishing Miss Ross's first story, we are happy to report a change in attitude at Miss Ross's home. We would have liked to have been present when Miss Ross flashed a certain letter, and later a certain check, before the astonished eyes of her family! It would have done our editorial hearts good!

YOU GOT TO HAVE LUCK

by S. R. ROSS

IT WAS WHEN THE GIRL MOVED toward the sink and turned on the water that Sam Cobbet crawled around the corner of the farmhouse. He sprang up the stairs to the porch, yanked open the screen door, and jumped inside. The door banged shut.

For a moment, now that he was in the house, Sam didn't know what to do. Then he saw the knife. It lay on the kitchen table, its blade glittering in the sunlight. Sam pounced on it, his eyes on the slim girl at the sink. She had not turned. She stood, back to the room, scraping a fat-crusted pan. The scratchy sound rose above the loudly running water.

Sam picked up the knife, was admiring it, when he heard a scream. He whirled. A baby sat on the bottom of a playpen in a corner of the kitchen, his tiny face red with terror. Sam tightened. He glanced toward the girl. She had turned off the tap, was drying a large white plate. She reached up to open the door of the cupboard that hung above the sink, and she stiffened. Sam's rat face, dark with beard, stared at her in the glass surface of the cupboard's door.

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She turned, then, and the dish in her hand fell and smashed on the floor. Her face was white; her eyes were fastened on the knife in Sam's fist. She stumbled to the playpen, scooped up the child, clutched him to her.

She stood that way, pulling her eyes, painfully from the knife, over the prison uniform — the gray pants, the sleazy matching shirt sticking in wet patches to his skin. The puzzled look that vied with the fear faded from her face. Only fear remained. Her eyes fastened on his thin-lipped mouth. She tried to speak, but her voice broke. She tried again.

"My husband'll be back in a few minutes. Very soon. You . . . you'd better go." Her voice was too loud, and it had a hollow ring.

Sam laughed. He remembered the way he had crouched in the thick, green foliage, listening to the voices that drifted out from the open window. He remembered the conversation — the concern in the young man's voice, the reassurance in the girl's, the rasp of a dusty jeep going down the gravel driveway. And then the girl was alone. Except for the kid. And Sam in the bushes had murmured over and over to himself, "You got to have luck. You got to have luck."

He still couldn't believe it.

Sam didn't fool himself. It wasn't over yet. Not the running. But the first big problem — that was solved. He was out. Now came the bigger problem, the staying out. But the breaks were coming his way. No siren yet. And now this.

"Heard everything you and your husband said." He smiled at her with his mouth. His eyes were gray pebbles. "Don't try and fool me. Your husband ain't gonna be back till three o'clock. That's a long time from now." He looked at the girl. She stood opposite him, her mouth almost moving with his in disbelief.

Sam continued. "You just listen to me, girlie, and nothing'll happen to you. Or to your kid." He pulled out a kitchen chair and sat down slowly. "First thing, I want something to eat. Then, when I'm good and rested up, I'll want some of your husband's duds." He grinned again. "Just you do like I tell you," he assured her, "and nothing'll happen."

The girl stood motionless for a moment. Then, in a flurry of activity, she began to move about the kitchen, putting the child in the playpen, gathering the pieces of broken china. Sam sat, watching. Only when she stood in front of the stove, frying something sputtery in a skillet, did he look away.

He glanced at the kitchen clock. It was 10:30.

He had been out an hour. An hour of riding in the empty laundry basket. An hour of running from the high walls, the iron cells. An hour of racing through the fields, ducking into the tall grasses. And no alarm yet. No use, he knew, to try to get news on the radio; they didn't even know he was out yet.

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And that was okay with Sam . . .

The sound of the prison siren split the midsummer morning. Sam stirred, uncomfortably, in the chair. The alarm was sharp and long. Its hoarse shrillness moved down his spine so that even in the sticky heat Sam felt chilled. He glared at the girl, as she set the plate of scrambled eggs on the table before him. She said nothing, just stood there, her glance jumping about the room, to the walls and corners, but always coming back to rest on Sam's rat face, on his rat mouth.

She's got guts, Sam thought, with annoyance. Aloud, he said, "Put on the radio. I got to hear the news."

She walked to the radio where it sat on the refrigerator and fiddled with the dial till the set glowed with life.

Suddenly the room was filled with the deafening blare of a dance band. Sam sprang from his seat. Savagely he twisted the music down. He pulled her around, slapped her, hard. The marks of his fingers appeared on her cheek.

"Try something like that again. . . !" He stopped. A voice had cut through the music with a news bulletin. Sam listened with satisfaction. They were wrong. They placed him about twenty miles on the other side of the pen. A motorist had picked up a hitchhiker; the hitchhiker had robbed him. They assumed it was Sam. He laughed aloud. You got to have luck, he told himself.

The music came on again.

Sam turned back to the table and pulled out the other chair. He motioned the girl into it. In the playpen the baby stood up, not crying now, holding onto the bars for support. Head tilted, it listened intently to the soft waltz music.

Not much like B Street Tavern, Sam thought, chewing swiftly. Here, only the endless ticking of the clock, the pop, pop, pop of the perking coffee, the hum of music. Here it was warm and light. There it was always cool and dark. Behind the bar, Mike; and at the register, Cora. No. Cora was dead. He'd been drunk that night . . . and she'd been nasty, laughing at him when he accused her of two-timing him. He wasn't sorry, though. Not even for the long years in there. Life, they had said . . . but now he was out.

And there'd be other Coras. Only nicer, much nicer.

He looked at the girl. Not bad, but mousy. Too quiet. Probably scared stiff, he thought. She looked away from him, made another survey of the room, fixing her eyes on the restless liquid in the glass percolator. Rising, she poured him a cup of the black coffee. Some of it slopped into the saucer.

It was 11:30 when Sam scraped the chair back. Got to get going, he thought, can't stay too long in one place. Had enough of that! He laughed at his own joke, and tucked the knife into the belt of his pants. The girl stared at his mouth. He brushed at

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his lips, angrily, till the few crumbs of dried egg fell off.

"Show me where that husband of yours keeps his clothes."

They'd be too big, he knew, but anything was better than his prison suit.

She led the way to a door at the rear of the kitchen. It opened into an uncarpeted hallway. He followed her down it, his heavy-soled shoes clattering on the boards. His toes squirmed about in the enclosed stickiness. It would be good to put on clean socks. Maybe even different shoes.

The girl was walking on wooden legs. He stayed close behind her. When she turned once, he grinned and thought: She's scared maybe I'll go back to the kitchen. Scared for the kid. That's why she does everything I tell her.

She walked past the hall telephone, where it hung near the foot of the stairs, and had just started up when it rang.

The brrring! of the bell made Sam jump. He grabbed at the girl's wrist and spun her around. Fear pulled at her lips.

The telephone kept ringing.

Sam cursed under his breath. The girl kept looking at him. The telephone rang and rang.

"I got to let you answer it! Might be somebody who knows you're home. Maybe even your husband. I'll tell you what to say. Don't try nothing funny. Understand?" He pulled her to the phone.

Sam took the receiver off the hook and held it, in his sweating fist, against his ear. His left hand covered the mouthpiece.

"Understand?" He snarled it.

She nodded.

In his ear, an old woman's voice said "Hello. Vic?"

"Tell her it ain't Vic. Tell her Vic ain't here. Say it's you and ask her who it is."

Sam removed his hand from the mouthpiece and the girl spoke into it, her glance still frozen to his face. "Vic isn't home. This is Mary. Who's this?" Her voice was highpitched and clear.

There was a funny sound at the other end of the line. Like a hiss. Sam gripped the receiver. Nosy old . . . ! he thought. Then the voice came again. "Mary? . . . This is mother. I thought I'd catch Vic when he came in for lunch. Can . . . you take a message for him?"

"Tell your mother yes!" Sam pointed, threateningly, to the knife. "Watch out you don't say nothing else!" He freed the mouthpiece again.

The girl looked away from him then, away from his face to a point above the phone box. "I hear you, Mother," she said. "Yes?"

The old woman's voice rattled the instrument. "Tell Vic the wheel on Davey's carriage is fixed. Dad fixed it this morning. He can come on over for it."

Sam pressed against the girl, his mouth to her ear. He whispered,

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"Say you got that. Then say goodbye." For a long moment the girl said nothing. Her fingers clung to the black phone box, the knuckles white. Sam's anger mounted. His left hand tight on the mouthpiece, he grabbed her shoulder with his right and shook her. She turned her head then, her mouth twitching, and looked at him.

"Say you got that," Sam muttered, "then say goodbye." He took his hand from the mouthpiece and, with an effort, the girl spoke into it. "I've got that. Goodbye, Mother."

The receiver went down at the other end of the line. Sam drew the knife and severed the cord where it came out of the box.

Close — too close for comfort.

"You're smart, girlie," he grinned. "Real smart you didn't try nothing. Now go get me some clothes and some of your husband's shaving stuff."

Thirty minutes later, when Sam stepped into the kitchen, they were waiting for him.

The sheriff had his gun propped on the edge of the table. He kicked out the chair opposite with the toe of his boot. His bass voice rose above the lighter voices in the kitchen — the highpitched voice of the girl, the gurgling of the baby, the sibilants of the old woman.

"Sit down, Sam," the sheriff said. "Drop the knife on the floor and sit down. And stay set till the warden gets here."

The muzzle of his gun was pointed gently at Sam's belly.

Sam sat down.

Puzzled, he relived the morning. What had gone wrong? Nothing. Nothing! And yet the sheriff had known he was there. They had come up to the house noiselessly. There had been no sound of a car, no doorbell, no banging of the screen door. They had known for sure he was there, and they had waited, comfortably, in the kitchen, waited for him to come downstairs.

"How the devil did you know I was here?" Sam whined. "I don't see —"

The sheriff grinned. He nodded toward the girl, who stood beside her mother, the baby in her arms, looking intently down at both men.

"That's it," he said. "You don't see and Mary don't hear. She's been stone-deaf since she was thirteen. She reads lips. Her mother tipped us off — she knew something was wrong when Mary acted as if she could hear over the phone."

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EQMM's DETECTIVE DIRECTORY

edited by ROBERT P. MILLS

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Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine rounds up the judgment of reviewers across the country. The key on the right gives sources.

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". . . contains some of the best plotting and writing you'll find anywhere." (LGO)	". . . freshness of phrase that has brought this author much applause." (FC)	*KEY TO REVIEW SOURCES*
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		AdV: *Avis de Voto in the Boston Globe*

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THE TWELVE-MINUTE GRAVE

by ROY VICKERS

ONE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT any husband — whether a murderer or not — would have more sense than to offer the police a lying explanation of his wife's disappearance. Crippen's many imitators, who have followed the footsteps of their master the whole way, have all given the same warning. Tell one lie, however trivial, and the police will keep you company until your wife is found in some form or another.

Yet the intelligent Robert Hainsby told the police that his wife, Brenda, often disappeared suddenly without explanation — which was disproved by the housemaid. Then he admitted that he knew she was in the course of elopement — which was true — but denied that he knew the identity of her lover — a lie which was exposed within an hour.

Elopements, as the police well know, are not always what they seem. An illicit lover of a missing woman is almost as good, from the police angle, as a husband. In this case, the lover, Charles Barstow, lived up to their rather hasty expectations. He too lied; and he behaved with gross inconsistency. The result was that the highly suspicious acts of the lover cast a mantle of innocence over the equally suspicious acts of the husband — and, of course, *vice versa*.

On the first Wednesday in July of last year, Charles Barstow, giving himself the name of Hobson, arrived in his car at the Willoughby Hotel, Leabourne, on the south coast, some 50 miles from the suburb of Bretcham, where the Hainsbys lived. It was nearly 4 in the afternoon. He checked in, asked that his luggage be taken to his reserved room, and inquired whether his "wife" was in the hotel. Receiving a negative answer, he registered surprise and annoyance. She had told him, he said, that she would arrive about lunchtime.

At 4:30 he ordered tea for two, and had the table placed in the lounge, near the doors. At 5, he planted himself on the terrace, trotting back to the Reception Desk every now and then to discuss possibilities. At 7, he asked the telephone girl to call the Hainsbys' number.

"Hullo, Hainsby! I say, old man, can I speak to Brenda?"

"Sorry, she's not at home!" Hainsby chuckled. "That's 'Hobson', isn't it? I thought she was with you."

"She hasn't turned up."

"Don't worry, old man! She has the haziest notions of time."

Barstow hung up and returned to the telephone girl.

"I suspect that my wife has had a road accident. Between here and Bretcham. I'll begin with the local police, if you'll put me through."

The local police had no accident to report. Nevertheless Barstow, in the

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name of Hobson, begged them to take particulars. He gave a physical description of Brenda, added that she herself would be driving, in a Ford car, of which he gave the number.

With the aid of the telephone girl he called the five largest towns on the route, ending with Bretcham itself, receiving similar answers and making similar requests.

He did not go in to dinner, but had a snack at the bar. While thus occupied, he was informed that the local superintendent had called in reference to the inquiry about Mrs. Hobson. In his room upstairs, Barstow repeated his story over a couple of whiskies. The superintendent proposed that they should chart Mrs. Hobson's known movements.

"Mrs. Hobson started from your home in Bretcham —"

"No. She had just dropped in on an old friend on the way here. As a matter of fact, we haven't a home — we're looking for one. We've been abroad, and have been staying with friends in London. But I mustn't trouble you with an accident that may have happened outside your locality."

That, of course, was no use. The superintendent was following a routine that was unknown to Barstow.

"So your friends are your only permanent address at present, Mr. Hobson? I'd better have their name and address."

Barstow tapped a cigarette and put it down unlit. "That's a very awkward question, Superintendent."

"I don't follow you, sir."

"She's not my wife. She and her husband are cat-and-dog, and go their own ways. I am certain she set out to come here — she must have — we've made all our plans for her divorce and our marriage. I want to find out where she is, and if she's alive I want to help her. But I don't intend to involve myself — nor her husband, for that matter — in a scandal. So I'm giving no addresses. I have not misled the police in any essential particular — and that keeps me the right side of the law."

The superintendent was sorry he had accepted the whiskey.

"You quite understand," he said, as he got up, "that we shall now follow our own line. Good night!"

Whether Barstow had forgotten that he had given the police the number of the Ford car is a moot point.

The published photographs of Brenda Hainsby tell only half the truth. The well-set eyes look lazy rather than determined; but justice is done to the beautiful line of the jaw, and the nose, with its ghost of a tilt saving it from severity. The cupid's-bow of the mouth flatters reality — the line was longer and thinner and betrayed, to the discerning, the shrew. Her hair, crudely described by the police as ginger, was a very fine red. She was exquisitely formed — at 30, her figure had lost nothing that mattered. Most important of all, she possessed the power,

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not uncommon in good-looking women of sharply defined moods, of varying her appeal. She could look ordinary or glamorous in the same setting, apparently at whim.

She was the spoiled child of a widowed physician, who left her his life savings of some twenty-three thousand pounds. She was energetic and ambitious, but untrained. She regarded her inheritance as a useful grubstake for some personable man who would turn it into a large fortune for her with reasonable speed.

Robert Hainsby was a very personable man — indeed, quite remarkably handsome, which, as many a handsome man can testify, is as likely to prove more of a stumbling-block than a blessing. He was a wholesaler and warehouseman, dealing in a number of the smaller appliances used in the hotel and catering trades. He was efficient, reliable, and progressive, though of late years these qualities had not enabled him to make much headway in a depressed industry.

Not without reason, Brenda saw in him the man of her dreams — a docile, ornamental go-getter. She quickly made up his mind for him, not suspecting that real embryo millionaires tend to have a strong will of their own.

Hainsby thoroughly enjoyed the process of being ensnared. He liked her enthusiasm when he spoke of the prospects of his business. He made no deliberate misrepresentation. With his eyes on the red hair — and the mouth that did not seem shrewish when you looked at it like that — he felt such a grand fellow that he even boasted a bit.

Retaining the odd £3,000 for personal emergencies, she handed him her capital, according to her plan. But not quite in the fine old Victorian fashion. She employed a lawyer. But she instructed him that there must be no clause which could hamper Robert, her motive being solely that of love. Being a very able lawyer, he produced a document, redolent of orange blossoms, which unobtrusively protected his client's interests.

During the honeymoon and for the greater part of the first year, Hainsby was very nearly as happy as he had expected to be. The lights began to fade when he made some casual remark about difficult conditions in the hotel industry — the sort of remark to which the listener is not expected to pay acute attention.

"But, darling, it won't affect *us!*" exclaimed Brenda. "You said the business only required extra capital to go ahead by leaps and bounds!"

He hoped he had not said "leaps and bounds," but he could not remember; so he concentrated on explaining industrial conditions. When he had finished, she told him that the bungling of others would act as a spur to him if he only looked at it in the right way. He should have more faith in himself — had she not given proof of her own deep faith in him?

Before the year was out, her own faith in his ability to turn all he

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touched to gold had lost its depth. She granted that he was a clear-headed, knowledgeable man; but his personality now seemed to her to lack punch — that streamlined certainty which, she felt sure, she could give him.

There followed a series of encouraging little talks. Streamlining, she suggested, could not be limited to working hours — it must be no less apparent in one's personal life. There were matters of dress and deportment — of the eye ever vigilant of the likes and dislikes of others — which could never be relaxed. She was very just. If she had to mention his failure to say goodbye to her before leaving for the office last Thursday, she would emphasize his correctitude in bringing her flowers for her dress the previous Tuesday week. It was just little things like that!

The repetition of that irritating phrase drove him to lose his temper and ask if she would like a divorce. She told him that she thought divorce was horrid, and that it was against her principles — which, by this time, was bad news for him.

That marked the end of the reality of their marriage. They hardly quarreled at all — they merely sank into a well-mannered apathy. She bought a Ford car, leaving the Chrysler to him.

The Ford, first and last, proved very expensive. The garage had to be widened. Owing to a slope of the ground, the extension had to be supported on props; but she paid for it cheerfully as the symbol of her independence.

She managed the house conscientiously with the aid of a cook-general who came at nine and left at six, but could always be bribed to stay on and serve the evening meal for Robert when Brenda wished to dine out, which was often. From the back of the house, you descended by three steps to a half-acre of pleasure garden, which was a nuisance to her, since gardeners had become very rare birds. She specialized in the easier flowers, notably nasturtium, which grows abundantly and looks after itself.

In the third year, Robert Hainsby's eye began to rove — and so, he supposed indifferently, did hers. A little later, he became aware of her friendship with Charles Barstow — not that she made any effort to conceal it. She frequently invited Barstow to the house where he would make himself amiable to Hainsby.

Hainsby assumed that her principles in the matter of divorce had broadened. But some months had passed before he related that idea to the document drawn up by Brenda's very able lawyer. He went to his own lawyer, hinted at matrimonial problems, and asked for an interpretation of the document in plain terms.

"In a nutshell," said the lawyer, "it means 'no love — no money'."

More precisely, in the event of divorce or legal separation, every one of the £20,000 would become repayable on three days' notice.

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About this time Hainsby began to accumulate a small library of "Famous Trials" — trials for wife-murder predominating. There was nothing furtive about this. The volumes were kept on the bookshelves in the morning room. On two occasions he sent his office messenger to the booksellers for copies, one of which happened to be the trial of Crippen. His interest lay in the summary of the details of the crime. He did not read the cross-examination. He did not make any detailed study of the murderers' mistakes. It was, in fact, escapist reading — raw material for a daydream which he had no immediate intention of translating into action.

Barstow was himself a lawyer specializing in corporation law, in which he was fast making an excellent reputation. By the time he would be middle-aged, if not before, he would probably be a wealthy man. He was well-dressed, healthy, and passably good-looking — a revised version, so to speak, of Brenda's first dream of upholstered romance.

One day, over lunch in London, Barstow told her about an artist friend of his who had a tiny flat in the West End which he had decorated himself. The flat, he said, had been left temporarily on his hands. It would be fun, he said, to go and see the decorations. The artist's name, he said, was Hobson.

After a third visit to the flat, Brenda went there alone in the morning and made the discovery that "Hobson" did not exist. She was not disconcerted. At their next meeting, making no mention of "Hobson," she began with a statement of her newly broadened views of the matrimonial state. Barstow interrupted her only to profess profound agreement and added that he himself — for instance — had an invalid wife, a very dear woman whose feelings nothing would induce him to hurt.

Brenda took it very well — very nearly created the impression that she had known it from the first, thereby winning increased admiration from Barstow. She satisfied herself that the tale was true and made no change in their arrangements until, a year later, the death of Mrs. Barstow was announced in the *Times*.

Brenda was very sympathetic and consoling. At the second meeting, after the funeral, when he did not seem to need any more condolence, she said she was worried about her money affairs, as the future seemed so uncertain. She would be grateful for his advice in the matter of reinvesting the twenty thousand pounds on loan to her husband's business but repayable, in a sense, at call. He gave her financial advice, to which she did not listen.

Bluntly stated, the 20,000 was not enough. In the long run, it was doubtful if even that much would offset the bad effect created by divorce publicity on the minds of some of the elder nabobs of the City.

In pursuit of her own purposes, Brenda practised the streamlining she preached. She thanked him very

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prettily for the financial advice and at their next meeting startled him out of his wits.

"Charlie!" Her voice was like a pointing finger. "Oh, Charlie, I feel so *unwashed!*"

"Darling, what on earth d'you mean?"

" 'Hobson'! Talking in code on the telephone! That smirking porter at the flats! Oh, and a dozen trifles like that! While *she* was alive, I didn't mind a bit. I thought of it as flowers laid on the altar of our love — I mean all the horrid little lies and evasions I was glad to offer up as a sacrifice to you and her. But now we are no longer protecting her, and it would all seem so backdoorish and sniggerish!"

"I see what you mean, and you're right, of course." He spoke gravely, fearing rocks ahead. "All my life I shall remember with a gratitude too deep for words —"

"Dear Charlie! You always understand!"

"At the same time, we have to be practical —"

"I know. But there's nothing, really, you need do. I confessed to Robert last night."

"Oh!" It was as if the breath had been knocked out of him. "It wasn't exactly news to Robert, was it?"

"He never knew about us for certain. He has no *evidence* — until I give it to him. I didn't tell him about 'Hobson's' — we can keep that as a bargaining counter, to prevent his demanding damages from you."

"Damages? He's not hostile, is he?"

"No — only a bit waspish about your not having come to him two years ago in an open manner. There was a little tough stuff — once removed, if you see what I mean. He would naturally ask the court for ample protection for my future — meaning damages to be settled on me, in case you deserted me, Charlie!" She gave a delightful ripple of laughter. "Poor Robert simple can't begin to imagine how people like you and me feel towards each other."

Brenda had carried the position by assault. It remained only to mop up.

"When he's finished blustering, he'll have to do what I tell him. I shall tell him tonight that, if he tries to hurt you, I shall call in my twenty thousand. If he behaves nicely, he can make his own terms."

"Is he doing anything right away?"

"No — except that he's seeing his lawyer today — who will tell him, of course, that we mustn't go on living under the same roof. It seems rather mean to force Robert to turn out, so I shall go somewhere until you're ready to join me."

Barstow had observed that the City nabobs were always quick to cut their losses, and without grizzling.

"You couldn't have done better, girlie! Go on keeping 'Hobson's' a secret — the flat, I mean — it would smear both of us, as *she* was alive at the time. We'll give him fresh evidence. You can turn the screw to keep my own name out of it. We'll stick to

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the name of 'Hobson.' In that name I'll make reservations at — say, the Willoughby Hotel, Leabourne."

"Charlie, how dynamic! When?"

"Sooner the better! What about the day after tomorrow — Wednesday? It's your maid's day off, isn't it? You can slip away without any fuss. I'll join you at lunch. Come in your Ford. You'll make it comfortably if you start at eleven sharp."

"Wednesday will mean a bit of a rush. Some of my clothes are marked; I'll have to re-mark, in case the chambermaids —"

"That sort of thing doesn't matter. The two weak points are the bank and the car. Don't ask your bank to forward cash, and don't park in the wrong place — look out for one-way routes, and don't speed. Don't leave your driving license in the glove compartment —"

"Oh, the police! That reminds me. My license must be renewed. I was pulled up last week and I swore it was in the mail for renewal. I did remember getting the application form — then I clean forgot to renew it."

"That's just the sort of thing that might run us into publicity," he grumbled. "Give me your license. I'll renew it myself, so that there's no mistake. Here's a pen — sign the form and I'll fill in the details. I'll give you the license at lunch on Wednesday."

Brenda was not surprised at the completeness of her victory. Men were sensible enough if you pushed them in the right direction — provided there was something to be pushed — that something which was lacking in poor Robert. Her mind became busy with small things. There were the suitcases to be packed and stowed in the Ford. She was glad that she had a new frock and the most perfect little cap to go with it — in a shade of green that Charles had never seen before and which suited her hair better than any other.

On the Wednesday morning when Robert knocked at her door on his way to the bathroom, she told him through the locked door that she had had a bad night, and would he mind seeing to his breakfast himself, reminding him that it was the maid's day off.

She had no feeling of guilt, believing she was hurting no one. If she was worrying at all, it was about her driving license. What if the police stopped her on the way to Leabourne? But mostly she was thinking of her "going-away dress." It would make the right impression on the hotel at lunchtime.

But by lunchtime her life had come to an end and her body had been hidden. . . .

As an indirect result of the Leabourne superintendent taking his own line, the local sergeant at Bretcham called on Robert Hainsby as the latter was leaving for the office on the following morning. The sergeant quoted the Ford's registration number.

"That's my wife's car," admitted Hainsby. He was so indifferent that

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the sergeant felt some doubt as to his own instructions.

"May I look inside your garage, Mr. Hainsby, so that I can report definitely whether the Ford is here or not?"

"You won't find it. But look, if you wish."

In the garage the sergeant noted the Chrysler and a bare space. The floor showed a line in the cement, marking the extension. A window in the rear was open. The sergeant thrust his head out as if he suspected that the Ford might be hidden in the garden. Immediately under him was a sloping bank, some three feet in depth, almost covered with a lush growth of nasturtium. Six feet away a line of giant laurel bushes cut off his view of the garden. He walked round the garage and satisfied himself that the Ford was not in the garden.

"Could I speak to Mrs. Hainsby, please?"

"She's not here. She left yesterday in the Ford with luggage, and I don't know where she has gone. If it's a matter of a summons, I can accept service on her behalf."

"It's an inquiry from the police of another county —"

"Then I'm afraid I can't help you, Sergeant. I'll ring you as soon as I hear from her. I must hurry to catch my train."

Hainsby didn't seem to wonder why the police were interested, noted the sergeant; he didn't even ask if there had been an accident.

While Hainsby was catching his train, Charles Barstow, as Mr. Hobson, was leaving the Willoughby Hotel and returning to London, to resume his own name. At the crossroads outside Leabourne, Barstow's Buick, among other cars, was stopped by a policeman, who asked to see his driving license. Impatiently, Barstow thrust his hand into his breast pocket and brought out the little red booklet.

"This license," said the constable, "is made out to Mrs. B. Hainsby, The Laurels, Acacia Road, Bretcham."

Barstow cursed under his breath. He saw that there was only one way out. "I've got my wife's and she's got mine. I'm Robert Hainsby. Same address, of course."

Such an incident was not uncommon. The constable took his note, which included the number of the car, and made no further fuss.

On the outskirts of Hibberton, a small town some twenty miles Londonwards of Leabourne, Barstow was held up by a towing operation.

A local superintendent, supported by a sergeant and three constables, was directing a break-down truck which was hauling a Ford car up a short, steep bank to the road. At the bottom of the bank, behind the Ford, a rutted cart-track wound into a plantation.

Barstow glanced at the Ford, and noted that they had not removed the luggage before hauling. To cut in now and ask what had happened to the woman, deemed to have been inside the car, would be to rivet himself into

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the publicity. As things were, "Mr. Hobson" was a very shadowy figure — The Lover Who Waited In Vain. Hainsby, for his own sake, would probably manage to get that covered up. So, as soon as fairway was restored, Barstow drove on, having remained silent.

At a few minutes before 6 that evening, Detective-Inspector Kyle of Scotland Yard, attended by Mansbridge, a promising youngster fresh from the police college, was admitted to Hainsby's house by the maid. She said she had last seen Mrs. Hainsby on Tuesday evening. Kyle explained that it was feared that Mrs. Hainsby had met with an accident, that he would wait for Mr. Hainsby. The maid, if she wished, could go home.

Kyle made a tour of the ten-room house, of which four upper rooms were out of use, the furniture draped in dust sheets. The house was Victorian, but the fittings and furniture were modern, substantial, and tasteful. He discovered nothing except that the couple occupied separate bedrooms. In the morning room he was amused at sight of Hainsby's collection of famous trials.

"Crippen, too! Looks as if we've come to the right address!"

"You've always told me, sir, that people who read about crime never commit one."

"Why bring that up?" grunted Kyle. "Let's have a look at the garden. See if you can pick up an idea."

Mansbridge found that the garden gave him little chance to shine.

"They don't keep a gardener," he offered. "It's all very shaggy. Marigold, poppy, nasturtium — all no-trouble flowers. And the nasturtium is spreading everywhere — needs cutting back."

"A Boy Scout could have managed that much. Let's see what's behind those laurels." He led the way. "More nasturtium for you!"

The sloping bank beneath the garage was almost covered with nasturtium, cascading from a single stem.

"Planted at a different time, or in the wrong kind of soil," pronounced Mansbridge. "The others are all near full bloom. These are dying."

"So they are," said Kyle thoughtfully. He leaned forward, took a grip of the foliage, and very gently pulled. The whole cascade slithered down the bank, clear of its stem — as if it had been a quilt draped over the soil, which was now seen to bulge a little in the middle.

"We've got something here, sir!"

Kyle was not enthusiastic. "I'm not much of a gardener myself," he muttered. "Help me put this back where it was."

"Put it *back*, sir? I bet there's a spade in that shed." Mansbridge was eager. "Those laurels give perfect cover — none of the neighbors could have seen any digging."

"I daresay. But you can't go digging in private gardens when you've no warrant and no evidence. I can hear his train coming in. We'll get round to the front."

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Hainsby seemed to accept their presence without surprise, and took them to the morning room. His manner was steady and patient — as of a man who dislikes police questioning but has nothing to fear.

Kyle was the least starchy of officials. He would ask questions as if he believed that the suspected person was anxious to help.

"We want to get in touch with Mrs. Hainsby," he began. "Do you mind telling us where she is?"

"I don't know," answered Hainsby. "I last saw her on Tuesday night. On Wednesday morning I spoke to her through the locked door of her bedroom, when she told me that she was not getting up to breakfast and reminded me that it was the maid's day off."

"And then?"

"I got my own breakfast, caught my train, and passed a routine day at the office. On Wednesday evening I saw that the Ford was out. As there was no note on the hall table saying she would not be home for dinner — she always did leave a note on such occasions — I went to her room and noted that several suitcases were missing. But I gave the matter no further thought until this morning, when a police sergeant turned up saying he had had an inquiry about the Ford from another county — I supposed for some traffic offense."

"And here are the police again!" grinned Kyle. The finding of the Ford in Hibberton wood had not been given to the newspapers — Kyle was keeping it up his sleeve. "Aren't you beginning to feel a bit worried about your wife, Mr. Hainsby?"

"Not a bit. The fact that you're asking me where she is means that she hasn't had an accident on the road. As to her not telling me where she has gone, there's nothing in that. She frequently goes off like that without a word to anyone."

"Frequently?" challenged Kyle.

"Frequently," repeated Hainsby. "I see I shall have to explain. Our marriage crashed some four years ago. But we don't throw the furniture at each other. We really get on rather well — like a brother and sister who haven't enough in common to quarrel about anything. We each go our own way."

"This time — when she went her own way, in her car — did she take her driving license with her?"

"Really, Inspector! How on earth do you expect me to know?"

Kyle looked at Hainsby as if to give him a chance to correct himself. Then his geniality dropped several points.

"Mr. Hainsby, at approximately nine forty this morning, was your Buick stopped near Leabourne? Did you show a constable your wife's driving license in mistake for your own?"

"At approximately 9:40 this morning, Inspector, I had dictated my letters and interviewed several members of my staff. My car, by the way, is a Chrysler." He added the number.

It was Hainsby's round. Kyle turned to Mansbridge.

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"If Mr. Hainsby will let you use his telephone, ask Register for the name of the owner of that Buick. Here's the number."

Hainsby was apparently under the impression that the interview was at an end.

"Have a drink before you go, Inspector?"

"No, thanks. Now, Mr. Hainsby, you said yourself that your marriage was unsuccessful. Do you think it possible that your wife has eloped?"

"Yes, it is possible — even probable." He added quickly, "But it's no use asking me for the man's name. I don't know who he is."

Kyle consulted a copy of the telephone numbers which the clerk at the Willoughby Hotel had called for Barstow, in the name of Hobson.

"Bretcham 378. That's your number, isn't it? At about seven last night, a man giving the name of Hobson called you and received an answer. He asked you where your wife was."

"He did not," asserted Hainsby. "At about that time, a man — unknown to me, as are many of her friends — asked to speak to her. I told him she was out and he thanked me and hung up. If he gave the name of Hobson, which I doubt, I did not hear it."

Mansbridge came back and handed Kyle a folded slip on which he had written: *Buick owner: Charles Barstow, 219 Windsor Gardens, London, W.8.*

"Does the name of Barstow mean anything to you, Mr. Hainsby?"

"Yes. An expert in corporation law. Very high standing — a coming man, I should say. A one-time friend of my wife's — he used to dine here occasionally a couple of years ago."

"I put it to you that your wife eloped — or intended to elope — with Barstow?"

Hainsby shook his head.

"Of all the men she knew you've picked the least likely!" he exclaimed, forgetting the risk of Barstow himself exposing the lie by revealing Brenda's negotiation with her husband for an anonymous divorce. "Their friendship was pretty warm at one time, but it cooled off. Even if he wanted to start again, which is improbable, he'd be too shrewd. He had an invalid wife then, who died recently. If he were to bolt with Brenda now, he would have to marry her after the divorce, and that would do him no good in the City."

"That certainly sounds convincing." Kyle was at his most amiable, as he rose to go. "Thank you for being so frank about your personal affairs, Mr. Hainsby — we appreciate that."

In the police car that was taking them Londonwards to Barstow, Kyle summed up: "Ex-lover — that's what Hainsby meant — ex-lover stages an elopement. Ex-lover — don't forget the 'ex' — rings up to ask if the girl has left home, meaning he hasn't seen her since she left home. Then how the blazes did her driving license come to be in the ex-lover's pocket?"

"I don't know, sir," said Mansbridge. "But I do know that, with

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ex-lovers, it's the woman who generally does the hanging on."

"You oughtn't to know that at your age," said Kyle. "You go on to the Yard and dig up anything you can on Barstow, while I'm swapping yarns with him."

A house in a Kensington Square connotes money. Kyle was admitted by a manservant who asked him to wait in a hall lounge, then took him in an elevator to the library on the second floor.

Barstow was a cleverer man than Hainsby; but he made a more substantial mistake at his very first interview.

At the Willoughby Hotel he had given the impression of a loving husband nerve-racked to incoherence by the dread of receiving news of an accident — duly reported by the staff. But he received Detective-Inspector Kyle with something approaching jauntiness.

"Well, I must say I didn't know Scotland Yard would come after me for giving a fancy name to cover the girl friend! Sit down, Inspector. Whiskey or a cocktail?"

"Whiskey, please," said Kyle, feeling that, with this type, a snub would retard progress. He waited for Barstow to ask some anxious question about the fate of the woman with whom he was deemed to be deeply in love.

Barstow made a bad first impression by missing this chance.

"As far as I'm concerned, I can give you the whole thing in a few words. Their marriage crashed years ago, so I don't feel like a blackguard. I expected her to be waiting for me at the hotel. About seven I got really worried. I rang up on the chance that she might have been taken ill before starting. Hainsby answered — said he didn't know where she was but assumed she was with me. So then I rang police stations along the road."

"She starts off to join you at Leabourne and vanishes on the way. We shall have to go back a bit. When did you last see her?"

"Monday last — we lunched together in Town." He sighed, somewhat heavily. "I little thought we had said goodbye forever."

"When did she give you her driving license?"

There was an instant of hesitation before Barstow laughed it off.

"I see what you've got hold of! That constable at the crossroads! I couldn't burden him with all my sorrows, so I told him that it was my wife's license. That committed me to saying I was Robert Hainsby — you'd have done the same yourself, Inspector — now, own up!"

"Can I see that license, please?"

For a woman's license it was unusually the worse for wear. The cardboard binding, though clean, was much crinkled, with a tendency to bend inwards — as if someone had tried to squeeze it into the shape of a cylinder. Kyle appropriated it.

"You haven't told me when she gave it to you."

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"Over lunch on Monday." He related the circumstances in which he had insisted on himself renewing Brenda's license.

"I don't understand why you had it sent to you instead of directly to her," objected Kyle. "With an elopement on your mind, it seems unnatural to go to all that trouble to cover the risk of a fine of 40 shillings."

"It wasn't the fine I was afraid of — it was the publicity. In a police court she'd have to give her real name. The hotel would have turned us out. I planned to run the divorce so that my own name would be kept out of the papers. Hence the 'Hobson' layout."

Kyle was still in doubt. It was just possible that Barstow was telling the truth about that license.

"You'll have a job to keep out of the headlines if we find her for you — alive or dead."

"It'll be 'dead'," said Barstow. "You know it as well as I do, Inspector, or you wouldn't be here."

"As I am here," grinned Kyle, "can you give me a lead?"

"Maybe I can give you a few facts. She had £20,000 in her husband's business — at call, mind you! But she told Hainsby she would accept any arrangement he liked to propose about repayment, provided he used the name 'Hobson' for the divorce. You can check the money with her lawyers." He added a name and address. "Now listen to the rest of it. She told me that she had made a will in his favor when they married and that she'd make a new one in my favor when she and I married. If she was telling me the truth about the wills, Hainsby stands to gain twenty thousand by her death."

This, Kyle admitted to himself, was an eye-opener.

"The inference being that her husband killed her?" asked Kyle. "But apparently she drove away in her own car on Wednesday."

"Did anybody see her drive away?" challenged Barstow. "And how d'you know that car was driven out on Wednesday morning? He could have killed her on Tuesday night."

"But what about the car?"

"The car was a blind. He could have driven it into that wood any time between Tuesday night and dawn on Thursday. And why did he choose Hibberton Wood? Because it's on the road she'd have taken to join me."

Kyle cursed at the revelation that news of finding the Ford had leaked.

"What would be the sense of that?" he asked.

"To point the finger at me — so that you fellows would come round and ask me to account for my time, between Tuesday night and my turning up at the hotel. I didn't go to the office on Wednesday, and heaven only knows whether my man noticed what time I left here — I didn't! I have a private garage for my car and nobody checks my comings and goings. And here you are getting me all hot-and-bothered about that driving license and one thing and another!"

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Kyle arrived at the Yard in a doubtful temper.

"Mansbridge! That order I gave about keeping the Ford out of the news —"

"Quite all right, sir. The Chief himself took it in hand. There's nothing in any of the evening papers, and the agencies promised not to handle it if it came in."

"Are you dead sure it was in none of the papers — nor on the ticker?"

"Quite sure, sir. I checked up while I was waiting for you."

Kyle beamed.

"Then try this one. How does Barstow know that the Ford was fished out of the wood at Hibberton?"

Mansbridge looked disappointed.

"It's on his road to London — he might have seen it on the way up."

"And not made a single inquiry — about the woman he says he intended to marry? You won't say Barstow put the car there himself, because you can't forget those nasturtiums!"

Kyle was reading Mansbridge's notes when Sergeant Rawlings came into the room with a sheaf of papers.

"The three suitcases in the Ford, sir. Sergeant Amy Kilner's report. She says the items are okay, but she's sure they were packed by a man in a hurry. She's written her reasons — nightdress wrapped round outdoor shoes, and so on. Must've been a funny sort o' man, she says."

"The nasturtiums for my money," muttered young Mansbridge.

On the following afternoon Kyle was again visiting The Laurels, Bretcham.

The policewoman's report on the packing of the suitcases was powerful support for Barstow's assertion — that the movements of the Ford were a blind.

"That maid must know whether Mrs. Hainsby did or did not pack those cases," said Kyle. "I won't need you on this, Mansbridge. You can have a nap in the back seat."

The maid showed signs of being helpful. She had been with the Hainsbys all their married life. She agreed that they lived as strangers. But she had never known Mrs. Hainsby to leave home suddenly without explanation — there were always letters to be forwarded. Kyle had been working at her for less than fifteen minutes and they were tackling the question of packing when there was a knock on the door of the morning room.

"May I speak to you privately, sir?" asked Mansbridge, who had let himself in by the back door.

They went into the dining-room. Mansbridge lowered his voice.

"Body in woman's dress between the props of the garage extension. I dug about a couple of feet through that bank under that dead nasturtium. I found what looked like blood on some of the earth I turned up."

"So you were right after all, boy!" exclaimed Kyle. "Go into the morning room and talk poppycock to that girl so that she can't hear me telephoning."

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Mansbridge was in danger of drying up by the time Kyle let him out and again took him to the dining-room.

"I want the body officially identified before Hainsby comes home — that is, about a quarter to seven. That girl's no good — she'll throw hysterics. Take the car and bring Barstow here. Try to be back before 6:30."

"What shall I tell him, sir?"

"You can give him the facts — in confidence, of course! Tell him exactly why we want him — make it a special-favor appeal. If you can't find him, or he won't come, bring Mrs. Hainsby's lawyer instead." Then he added, "I told you to wait in the car. If you do this sort of thing too often, they'll make you an inspector — and then you'll wish you'd always obeyed your orders."

By six the body of Brenda Hainsby lay on a trestle-table in the garage and the doctor was making the preparations necessary for his preliminary examination. In due course he reported to Kyle.

"Our old friend the blunt instrument — a fairly heavy iron bar, and long enough to give good leverage — for instance, that tire lever now standing in the corner of the garage. The skull was shattered and death was instantaneous. I can't place the time — a couple of days, plus or minus." He added, "I have — er — tidied things up a bit."

Kyle went into the garage with him. The clothing, a smart costume in green, bore hardly any trace of contact with the soil, as it had indeed been lying in a space between the props of the floor. A sequinned, cap-like hat was slightly askew.

"That left hand?" asked Kyle.

"Yes, I'll deal with that presently," said the doctor.

"Right!" Kyle turned towards the half-open door. "Hold up a minute, Doctor." Mansbridge was between the folding doors, Barstow behind.

"Very good of you, Mr. Barstow! Your idea that the car was used as a blind was a straight tip. You're saving me a vast amount of bother."

"That's all right." Barstow was a little wintry. "But Hainsby is due in a few minutes. Surely he could identify his own wife!"

"Evidence against himself? Liable to be struck out on application by defense — I see you've never had a criminal for a client, Mr. Barstow. This way, if you feel up to it."

Barstow faced the ordeal without a tremor. Back in the open air he was a trifle unsteady. Mansbridge took his arm and helped him into the house. The dining-room had been converted into local headquarters. Three men were seated at the table, writing. Sergeant Rawlings was in charge.

"Give me an identification form — Mr. Barstow is in a hurry," said Kyle. There was nowhere to sit. Kyle invited Barstow into the morning room where he courteously filled in the answers himself, and troubled Barstow for his signature only.

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"What a rigmarole!" exclaimed Barstow. "Isn't that Hainsby's voice in the hall?"

Sergeant Rawlings appeared, handed Kyle a cardboard folder.

"From the doctor, sir."

Kyle was reading the contents when Hainsby came in, shut the door behind him, and leaned against it, glaring at Kyle.

"Two of your men followed me from the station, as if I would bolt like a rabbit. You've found her body here, haven't you? Under the garage — I know! This morning I nerved myself to walk round to the back. The nasturtium was all withered. I knew she was there, of course! Why have you got Barstow here?" He gave a cackling laugh. "You can't imagine *he* had anything to do with it."

"Sit down, Mr. Hainsby!" Kyle barked it out as an order. "I'll give you a moment or two to get your breath and pull yourself together." He reopened the folder Rawlings had brought him and affected to re-read the contents.

"This is very painful to me," said Barstow, and made to leave the room. But Kyle had taken Hainsby's place at the door. Hainsby burst into misguided speech.

"You are going to ask me whether I killed Brenda. Yes, I did — 100 times in the imagination! And buried her under the garage. In your sense — no! I did not kill my wife. But I don't expect you to take that seriously. Good Lord —" he pointed excitedly at the bookshelf "— it's all written down there! The trial of Alfred Byker. He buried her under his garage, and he —"

"Shut up, Hainsby!" shouted Kyle. When the other had subsided, Kyle said, calmly, "Mr. Barstow has frankly admitted that he was eloping with the deceased. You knew it. You lied to us about it because she threatened to call in her loan of twenty thousand pounds if you mentioned his name in connection with divorce. Why bother to lie to us about it? How could she carry out her threat when she was lying dead under the garage?"

"I didn't *know* she was lying dead —"

"I agree that you didn't know she was dead, Hainsby. I agree that you did not kill her. So why all this hysteria?"

Kyle turned to Barstow.

"Would you like to cut the rigmarole, as you call it, and answer a single question? Did *you* kill her?"

"I shall report that question, Inspector," Barstow glared. "As you seem to be waiting for an answer — no. I did not kill Mrs. Hainsby."

"What a pity!" sighed Kyle. "I'll tell you just how it was done and see if you change your mind. You turned up here on Wednesday morning very soon after Hainsby had left. You pulled up those nasturtiums and dug a good wide tunnel to the hollow under the flooring. It didn't take very long, since there's only about a couple of feet of soil — my junior did the job in twelve minutes. You

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waited about until she came out, dressed up for lunch at a smart hotel. All smiles on both sides. By a trick you induced her to walk with you to the back of the garage. Just as she was about to step behind those laurel bushes she stopped short. '*Oh! My driving license!*' she said — or words to that effect."

Kyle produced the driving license, dropped it on an occasional table, close to Barstow. The crinkled cardboard definitely bent inwards.

"To keep her sweet and to avoid discussion, you gave her the license. As she stepped behind the laurels, you struck her with that tire lever which you had planted where you wanted it. She was dead by the time she reached the ground. The contraction of the muscles in the moment of death had crushed the cardboard of the license. *Look at it!*"

Kyle paused for only a split-moment. "You were quick-witted enough to spot that the license might be evidence against you, so you coaxed it from her hand and subsequently straightened it out. You put the earth back — and you put the nasturtiums back, knowing that the flower would quickly die and call attention to that spot. Then you went to the Ford, still in the garage, and messed her packing about, to suggest that the packing had been done hastily by Hainsby. You drove the Ford to Hibberton, dumped it, and then got back to your Buick which you had garaged overnight at Maenton. So, I repeat: did *you* kill Mrs. Hainsby, Barstow?"

"Well, I'll be —" exploded Barstow. "That whole pyramid of nonsense built on a driving license! I protest against being arrested and I shall bring a civil action if you detain me."

"It isn't built on the driving license," said Kyle. "It's built on the *envelope*. You handed it to her in the envelope in which it had come to your flat. She took it in her left hand, tore the envelope with her right hand, and removed the license. You took the license out of her right hand. *You didn't think to take the envelope out of her left hand!* The doctor did that. You can see it, if you like — only don't try to touch it."

Kyle opened the folder. Barstow stared at a torn and much creased official envelope, rubber-stamped Motor Vehicle Licensing Dept., and addressed to Mrs. Hainsby, c/o C. Barstow, Esq., 219 Windsor Gardens, London, W.8., and postmarked for the last post on Tuesday night.

"That was delivered at your house, Barstow, by the first delivery on Wednesday morning," said Kyle. "*Could anyone on earth but you have handed it to her?*"

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Miriam Allen deFord's "De Crimine" is so unusual a detective story — even for Miss deFord! — that it deserves a few prefatory comments. But we could not possibly hope to introduce the story as well as the author herself did, so we quote from her letter, which accompanied the manuscript.

"It occurred to me," wrote Miss deFord, "that it was about time I used the place and period I knew best as the setting for a mystery story. True, John Dickson Carr anticipated me in writing a story with Edgar Allan Poe as the detective, but I am willing to bet that no one else will send you a story in which Cicero is, if not the detective, at least the deus ex machina! *The date of 'De Crimine' is October, 45 B.C.*

"You can rely absolutely on the authenticity of this story; besides the work I have done in Latin translation and Roman biography, I even consulted the world's greatest authority on Roman law, and did a lot of reading to make no mistake in clothing, furniture, architecture, or anything else. Cicero (and Tullia), Clodia, and Dolabella are, of course, real people; the others (except Tiro) are fictitious."

So, meet Cicero, "still the clever man of influence to whom those in difficulties turned naturally for aid" — and we hope that you will agree with the author and us that "De Crimine" is "not just a period piece, but a genuine mystery story."

DE CRIMINE

by MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD

TIRO, CICERO'S FAITHFUL FREEDman and secretary, brought him word that a lady who had come all the way from Rome begged to be permitted to see him. She was Favilla, the wife of Gnaeus Manlius Ordo.

The great old advocate frowned. He had recovered from his first overwhelming grief at the death of his adored daughter; had even been able to move from Lanuvium back to his villa of Tusculanum where she had died; but he was trying to drug his sorrow by the writing of philosophy, and he desired and allowed no visitors.

"I know the family, of course," he said to Tiro. "They belong to the late opponents of our benevolent master in Rome — just as I did, until it was too hopeless. I believe Manlius is still in Spain, hesitant about coming home since the final defeat of the Pompeians, unless Caesar issues an amnesty. And I have a vague memory that I once knew the wife, though I can't quite place her. I have met too

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many people in the past forty years."

"She asked me to say," the secretary interposed deferentially, "that she was a dear friend of Tullia's when they were girls together, and that she pleads for an interview with you for Tullia's sake."

The tears started to Cicero's eyes, as always at the mention of that beloved name. He turned his head for a moment; not even Tiro knew what he had suffered.

"I will see her," he said brusquely.

He half-recognized her as she entered, and automatically he turned on all the charm that, as much as his oratory, his patriotism, or his legal wisdom, had won his way to the front when he had entered public life, a "knight," a "new man" among the old patrician leaders of the Republic.

"Favilla!" He took both her hands in his. "It has been very long since we have met. It is good of you to come this long journey to see me."

"No, it is good of *you* to be willing to see *me*," she contradicted him. She was tall and slender, not exactly beautiful, but with the unmistakable distinction of her aristocratic heritage. She must be about thirty — of an age with Tullia — but she was childless and she had kept her figure.

"I must be frank, Cicero," she went on. "Tullia *was* my close friend all through our girlhood, as you may remember — though I saw her seldom after we were both married — and I did love her dearly. My heart aches for you; I wish there were something I could say that would comfort you. But I came here today to ask for help, not to offer it. I have a difficult problem before me, and I need your advice."

Cicero played with the stylus with which he had been writing when Trio had entered.

"Since you have come so far just to consult me," he began doubtfully, "if I can help you at all I shall do so gladly. But of course you know that at present — perhaps permanently — I have withdrawn from both politics and the law. If your problem is anything of that nature, you should go to Caesar, not come to me."

"It isn't political," said Favilla. "It's a family matter, and with my husband away — you know about him, I suppose?"

Cicero nodded.

"I have no idea how soon it will be safe for him to come home, even though he never held a prominent post in Pompey's army, either in Africa or in Spain. While he's gone, everything — his home, his estate, even his honor and good standing — all are in my charge; I represent him and must safeguard his interests. And now —"

"Now something endangers them?"

"In a way. A month ago his old aunt, who lived with us, died — died suddenly. Aufidia — you may recall her. She wasn't really his aunt, but his uncle's widow; but when her husband died she had no living relative left, so naturally Gnaeus took her in with us. She wasn't much of a burden; sometimes we hardly realized she was

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there. In late years she had grown very heavy, and she seldom left her own rooms, and practically never left the house. We aren't rich, you know — we have lost most of our fortune during the disturbances of the past ten years, like so many others — but we could always give Aufidia a home, and plenty to eat, and a servant to wait on her. I tried to keep her from feeling neglected; I visited her at least once a day, and I think she was fond of us both."

"She had no property of her own?"

"That's what I'm coming to. Unfortunately — perhaps you remember her husband, Titus Manlius Ordo? He loved good living, and he always lived beyond his means. By the time he died, he had nothing left; his wife's dowry had gone with the rest — there was nothing for her to recover. Even their slaves had to be sold for his debts."

"Then Aufidia came to you penniless? Poor old thing — I remember her when I was a very young man, and when she was a striking woman and a famous hostess."

"It's hard to realize now. She had grown very lame as well as being so fat, her heart was bad, and she was becoming just a bit — well, foolish, mentally. She did save one thing out of the wreckage, and that was some of her jewels. She had some very valuable and very beautiful pieces. They were given to her in the early days of her marriage by her husband, and most of them were heirlooms — from the Manlius ancestors, not from hers. So we were the natural heirs, though of course while she lived they remained her property. It wasn't just their monetary value, though that was very high, but they were part of my husband's inheritance — you understand?"

"Perfectly." Cicero winced a little; even after all those years he could still be hurt by the most innocent implication that, naturally, he wouldn't comprehend the ideas and customs of high society. "And now, since her death, they are not in your possession?"

"How did you know that?"

"My dear lady, otherwise why would you have mentioned them? What happened?"

"I'll try to tell you." Favilla's voice shook a little.

To spare her, Cicero rose and stood looking out at the soft October landscape. Favilla went on.

"It was just a month ago. I was in the atrium, writing a letter to my husband. Aufidia's maid — a Cappadocian woman who had been with her ever since my aunt came to our house, and who was devoted to her — came running in, screaming that something was wrong with her mistress. It seems Aufidia had sent her to launder and mend some old tunics — she was very careful of her clothes, and we scarcely ever had to buy her anything new — and it had taken the woman half an hour or so. When she came back to Aufidia's bedroom, where she had left her mistress napping, she found — well, her breath gave out at that

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point, and she could only gesture to me to come.

"I ran as fast as I could. There was the old lady, lying half on the bed, half off it. Her face was a queer, sickly purple, her mouth was open, and I could see at a glance that she wasn't breathing.

"Her right arm lay stretched out toward the cabinet where she kept her jewels. The doors of the cabinet were open, the drawers pulled out, and most of them were empty. There was nothing left except a few worthless trinkets. We found the key later, under the bed.

"I thought at first Aufidia had had a stroke, and might still have a spark of life left. The servant and I managed to get her great weight back on the bed — I couldn't be sure, under all that fat, whether her heart was still beating or not — and I sent another slave running for the Greek physician, Callidoros, who had tended her before when she was ill. He came quickly, but as I had feared, it was too late. She had been dead for nearly an hour by then, he told me."

"What did he say was the cause of her death?" Cicero asked.

"He couldn't tell — they never do know, really, do they? He said her heart had stopped, which I knew without his announcement. By the time he arrived I had closed the cabinet; I didn't want any gossip started, and I gave the maid strict orders to say nothing to anyone without my permission. She was so frightened for herself that I'm sure she obeyed me."

"You thought, of course," Cicero suggested, "that there had been foul play. Someone had killed her and stolen the jewels — or frightened her to death — a fat old woman with a weak, over-laboring heart — and then stolen them. Isn't the next step, in great households like yours, to put all the slaves to the torture to find out who is guilty?"

He was sorry for the malice of his remark as soon as he saw Favilla's painful flush, but he had been unable to resist that minute revenge.

"It was probably the custom in our parents' time," she said with asperity, "but I hope we're a little more civilized today. Besides, we don't have a great household in that sense; we have only twenty house slaves in all, and I know every one of them. We have been barely able to keep up appearances in recent years. Naturally, the first thing I thought of was that someone who knew about the jewels had bribed one of my servants to do the deed — for no one could enter the house past our doorkeeper without my knowing it. But as it happened, I knew where every one of the servants had been during that half-hour. The details don't matter, but some were out on errands, others were in my sight from the atrium, the doorkeeper was chained to his door as usual, and so on."

"The Cappadocian woman?"

"Most unlikely; she was too terrified, it would have taken a skilled actor to imitate her astonishment and horror. Besides —"

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Favilla broke off, and herself looked a little frightened, as if she had said too much.

They had been sitting in the peristyle of the house, with the fountain playing in its middle and the soft breeze ruffling the plants set against the painted columns. Now Cicero clapped his hands for a servant, and ordered him to bring wine.

"Talking dries the tongue," he said with a smile. "And you will, of course, stay the night before you begin the long journey back. I must give orders for dinner, and see that your escort is properly cared for. I am afraid I am an awkward host; it has been so long since I entertained a guest."

He sighed deeply, and Favilla, with exquisite tact, only looked the quick sympathy she felt. Here at Tusculanum the great lawyer and orator had once given banquets to the most important men in Rome; here, in some cubicle beyond the *cavum caedum*, his Tullia had died in his arms, only eight months before.

The slave had gone again, leaving them alone, and they had drunk a cup of wine together, before Cicero spoke again.

"You are not telling me all, Favilla," he said gently. "I can't help you if you hide things from me."

"I know." She toyed with her wine cup. "It's my brother — Sextus."

"Sextus Favillus?" Cicero sounded surprised. "Why, he's a child."

"He is nineteen. He would be furious to hear you call him a child." She smiled briefly. "He is very handsome, and very brilliant — he wants to be a poet, he has set Catullus and your old opponent Calvus as his models — and he is quite unmanageable. You know, I'm sure, that we were left orphans when I was a very young girl and he was little more than a baby. We had a good guardian, who looked after our estate and saw that we were well cared for. But we were very lonely, both of us, and we had no one to love but each other. I loved him very deeply, Cicero — I have no children, and in a sense he has been almost like my son."

"You are not so close now?"

"How could we be, after I was married? — though, of course, I love him just the same. He has fallen in with a wild crowd, young men with far more money than he ever had. He's anticipated most of his inheritance, and squandered the money in their company — wine and gambling and girls. His trustee has just thrown up his hands in despair. I tried hard to save and help Sextus — my husband did his best while he was at home — but to my young brother I suppose we were a pair of croaking old meddlers. He refused to live with us any longer when I wouldn't welcome his friends. We have never quarreled, but he has long since ceased to pay any attention to anything I might say."

"And so?"

"And so a few months ago he fell headlong in love — madly, crazily in love — with just the wrong woman.

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She is more than twice his age — though she is beautiful still, and rich, and of a very good family. Of course she laughed at him and snubbed him, which made him only more ardent. He has even" — her voice trembled — "he has threatened to kill himself if he cannot have her — or at least have a share of her, which is all any man ever has," she added bitterly.

"I see." Cicero's heart fell; only one woman in Rome exactly fitted that description.

"No, forgive me, but you can't see it all. Let me tell you in my own way. Because — because I didn't want a scandal, because I had to make all the decisions alone, and the honor of my family and my husband's family was in my hands, and because as things are now, a criminal trial would only be a farce — I should have had to find a man to act as accuser, I should have had to name somebody to accuse, and give the reasons —" Favilla's pale face grew even paler; who was there to be accused but her brother? "And then of course the witnesses and the jury and even the praetor would be bribed — they always are nowadays —"

"Not always. I've won a few cases without bribery myself, Favilla," Cicero interrupted dryly. Where, he wondered forlornly, was the great incorruptible Republic of his youth? And yet in his heart he felt relieved by Favilla's last words; ever since she had started telling about Aufidia's death, until she had got out that revelation about her brother, he had been afraid she was going to ask him to act for her as somebody's accuser, or to defend somebody, and there was nothing he was surer of than that it would be most indiscreet of him to make any public appearance, or even to go to Rome at all, at this juncture of political affairs. Besides, he thought cynically, if the woman concerned were the one he thought it was, there would indeed be plenty of her money put out in bribery, if only because she loved a row, with herself in the center of it.

Favilla was speaking again.

"Of course you have," she answered him crisply. "And nobody knows better than you how different conditions are at present. Anyway, right or wrong, I decided to keep things to myself if possible. Officially, Aufidia had died of a stroke, or of heart disease. After all, she was nearly eighty. I wrote my husband of her sudden death, and in his name I gave her the funeral to which her birth entitled her. And nobody but myself — and now you — knows about the jewels. Except, of course, the person who took them, and the person who has them now."

"And the Cappadocian woman."

"Who doesn't count. I've taken her over to help my own maid, and she's so grateful not to be involved that she would die before she would talk. You didn't notice what I said last — 'the person who has them now.' "

"I noticed. You mean they are no longer in the possession of the thief."

Favilla shivered at the word.

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"I swear to you, I never even thought of my brother until I saw —" She took a deep breath. "I don't, naturally, associate with the group surrounding his — lady-love. But four days ago I was at the baths. She was there, in full panoply, with all her entourage. I imagine Sextus was somewhere on the outskirts, but he must have seen me and vanished. He hasn't been near me since Aufidia died."

"He was with you at that time?"

"He had spent an hour with me, just before," she said reluctantly. "And whenever he came to see me, he dropped in for a chat with Aufidia. He was a great pet of hers — had been since I was married, nine years ago, before her husband died, when Sextus was only a little boy. But this is what I want to tell you. We came face to face in the corridor at the baths. We didn't speak, of course — after all, we have never actually met socially, though she belongs to a greater family than either my husband's or mine, and as society is nowadays she isn't even exiled from it. But I've led a quiet life, and I don't frequent the kind of parties she gives or attends. Still, I've got eyes, and I used them. She had on a magnificent gold arm-band, set in the design of a peacock, in rubies, pearls, and emeralds. She wore a necklace to match. She wore two great pearls in her ears. Those, I suppose, could not be identified, but the necklace and the arm-band could. They were Aufidia's."

There was a silence. Then Cicero asked mildly: "Who is she?"

"Clodia."

"That is what I had guessed. 'The ox-eyed one,' the sister — and probably more — of the man who had me exiled and had my home torn down. The woman I shamed and excoriated in public in words no Roman lady had ever had applied to her before, when she had young Furius up on the charge of attempting to poison her — and she sat there and gloried in the sensational publicity. My bitterest enemy on earth. . . . Why have you come to me, Favilla? What could I do for you where Clodia is concerned? Twenty-five years ago, perhaps, when she cast those ox-eyes on me and wouldn't believe they couldn't move me — No, you should apply to Caesar to help you; he, I believe, is still in her good graces. But not I."

"Yes, you," said Favilla earnestly. "Just *because* you hate her and she hates you — because you know her so well, know her weaknesses, her real self behind the beauty and the wit and arrogance and self-will. I don't ask you to do anything — just to tell me what to do. I must, I must get those jewels back, quietly and without a scandal. And I will not take any means that might expose or imperil Sextus."

"If you will forgive me for saying so, my dear," Cicero commented, "your young brother seems to me to be considerable of a fool. I presume he thinks of himself as a second Catullus, and because our Clodia was Catullus's 'Lesbia,' she must be his as well. He forgets that she broke the

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heart of the loveliest lyric poet Rome has ever produced. And Catullus never stole any jewels for her, either."

"Don't use that word! My brother isn't a thief."

"No? What do you call it? Think of the very least that he could be guilty of, Favilla. Suppose he cajoled the old lady into giving him the jewels; he knew they weren't hers to give, in right and equity, and he knows now that excitement and remorse killed her afterwards. Or think of what is much more likely — that he found Aufidia dead or dying of a heart attack and then rifled the cabinet. Or — you might as well face it — that he demanded the jewels from her and she resisted physically — that she died from the effects — or that he smothered her or strangled her —"

"Oh, no, no! That's impossible! He couldn't — it isn't in his nature."

"Who knows what is in the nature of a youngster crazy with frustrated desire? I don't even say, as you might expect, that Clodia put him up to it. I doubt if she has the remotest idea where the jewels came from, though she must have a shrewd notion that he stole them from someone — from someone who doesn't know about it yet or for personal reasons doesn't wish to claim them. What could a boy like Favillus mean to her? He would be a bore and a pest, and to get rid of him she might very well say, 'All right, bring me a gift worthy of my favors and we'll see,' thinking that would be the last of him."

Cicero sighed, and went on. "Poor lad, if I know my Clodia, he hasn't even had value received for them. But she would accept them, and wear them openly, just because she loves beautiful jewels, and laugh at him all the time. That woman doesn't know the meaning of fear — either physical fear or fear of notoriety. Favilla, this is a serious business. I'm speaking to you now, not only as your friend, but as a lawyer. Theft — and perhaps murder — are dreadful crimes, not boyish pranks. You can't get those jewels back without exposing your brother. You can't get them back anyway, to my way of thinking. Clodia is neither decent enough to return them voluntarily, nor capable of being scared into returning them under threats of disclosure."

Favilla's eyes filled with tears.

"There *must* be a way," she murmured. "And believe me, I'm not the doting imbecile you take me for. I know Sextus has been very, very wrong. For my husband's sake as well as for my brother's, I have to avoid publicity, but once I have the jewels back I intend to confront Sextus with the whole thing, and to see that he makes what amends he can. Only, I must get them back first, for if I talked to him now he would only protect Clodia instead of listening to me. Surely, Cicero, you who know her so well can tell me some way in which she can be coerced, if she can't be appealed to and can't be threatened? Surely there is a weak spot somewhere through which she can be reached?"

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"There may be," said Cicero slowly after a pause. "Yes, there just possibly may be."

Publius Cornelius Dolabella had been Cicero's son-in-law. Tullia had married him against her father's advice and wish, and she had remained passionately in love with him, though finally his unfaithfulness, extravagance, and profligacy had forced her to divorce him shortly before the birth of their second son — the child of whose parturition she had died. In spite of this, he and his father-in-law had remained on friendly terms; Dolabella was one of those worthless but utterly charming scamps of whom nobody approves but whom nobody can help liking. Now Cicero wrote, asking him to come to Tusculanum as soon as possible. There was nothing Dolabella would not do to oblige — especially if the obligation gave him no trouble and might afford him a bit of cynical amusement. He moved in Clodia's circle; he had just returned from Spain with Caesar; no one could be better fitted for the business Cicero had in mind.

The afternoon following Dolabella's return to Rome from Tusculanum, Clodia, whose beauty seemed timeless and whose daring and flouting of convention only grew with the years, was at home to her acquaintances — which meant practically all Roman upper society with the exception of the women of a few austere and old-fashioned families. Clodia had never cared for women, anyway. Dolabella was there, the bubbling center of gayety as usual, under the influence of his hostess's excellent Falernian wine.

And young Sextus Favillus hovered as near as he could get to his beloved, who paid little attention to him outside of an occasional enigmatic smile. Once in a while, casually, as if by accident, he touched a fold of Clodia's violet stola, in the new and rather flashy style of colored garments for ladies. So far as he could be, when he had to share her with so many others, he was content, for once more she wore the most precious of the gems he had given her, the earrings and necklace and arm-band, and when he greeted her she had laid a polished fingernail for a moment on the ruby-and-emerald peacock at her throat, and whispered, "Soon, I promise you."

Here in the open sunshine, with wine under his tunic and the sound of laughing voices all about him, Sextus could look at those jewels and think only of the woman who wore them. At night, in the rented rooms which were all he could afford since most of his borrowed money had gone in careless living, it was different.

And then, with senses half-dulled by drinking and lack of sleep, he heard Dolabella say: "My dear lady, where *did* you get those ornaments you are wearing?"

Clodia tapped him smartly on the hand.

"What a question!" she exclaimed in that rich, throaty voice of hers.

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"Do you always make such personal remarks, Dolabella? Where do you think I got them? I bought them, of course. Or perhaps they were a gift."

"Then, my dear, somebody has taken a gross advantage of you."

"What do you mean? They aren't false, are they?" Her voice was suddenly sharp.

"Not so far as I know — I believe they are very valuable. But if *I* recognized them, as I did, so will a lot of other people. You are too trusting, Clodia my love. Some rascally merchant has taken you in, or one of your acquaintances is trying to play a trick on you. If I hadn't seen those things today and warned you, you would soon be the laughing-stock of all Rome."

Sextus, very white, was unable to move. How *could* Dolabella have recognized the gems? They had never been outside of Aufidia's bedroom for twenty years.

And now everybody was listening. The boy felt himself tremble. In a sudden flash of despair he wished desperately and vainly that time would unroll and obliterate the past six weeks of his life.

"Explain yourself, my friend," said Clodia coldly.

Dolabella laughed.

"I couldn't possibly mistake them," he answered lightly. "I must be growing old; when I was a young man everybody would have known them at sight, and there are plenty of us left who will. I'm surprised you didn't recognize them yourself. Why, Clodia, those are the famous jewels which Lucius Torrentius Afer, that freedman who grew so enormously rich in slave-trading, bought to adorn his pet monkey! It was the joke of the whole city. When the creature died, he gave the baubles to one of his servants, and the fellow must have sold them to some trader."

Clodia turned ashen with anger.

"You wretched puppy!" she spat at the miserable Sextus. "So you thought you could make me ridiculous, did you? You dirty, misbegotten ape! How dared you do such a thing to me — how *dared* you?"

Sextus forced his thick tongue to a few stammered words.

"It's not true!" he whispered. "They aren't — they came from —"

He fell abruptly silent.

Clodia snatched the band from her arm, the circlet from her neck, the pearls from her ears, and threw them at the stricken boy's feet.

"Get out of my house!" she screeched. "Get out of my sight and never come near me again as long as you live!"

White to the lips, Sextus turned awkwardly and fled.

With clenched fists, Clodia paraded the atrium, cursing Sextus Favillus in words seldom heard outside the Subura, and not often, even there, on a woman's lips. She was in one of her magnificent rages, usually witnessed only by her unhappy lady's maid. The guests felt uncomfortable and embarrassed. One by one they slipped away without their hostess's

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even noting their murmured excuses and farewells. Unobtrusively Dolabella stooped and picked up the jewels, and placed them carefully in a fold of his toga.

That night he sent them by a trusty slave to Tusculanum. Cicero wrapped them in a package of his own to despatch to Favilla. He felt full of amused satisfaction. His sensitive vanity was pleased that even now he was still the clever man of influence to whom those in difficulties turned naturally for aid. Dolabella had written the full details of the scene at Clodia's. Cicero's lips twitched. If only he had someone with whom he could share this delicious gossip! How his darling Tulliola would have delighted in the story! The ready tears blurred his eyes again as he affixed his seal to the parcel.

Three days later the jewels were back in Aufidia's cabinet, and the cabinet itself was in Favilla's bedroom.

Sextus had disappeared. For a week nobody saw or had news of him. Then, haggard and sick from days of drinking, he turned up shamefacedly at his sister's house.

Her heart smote her at his woebegone appearance, but for the boy's own sake she made herself speak sternly.

"So you have come to me at last, have you?" she said. "And now, little brother, we must have a reckoning."

She led him to a room where they would be out of sight or hearing of the servants. Sextus threw himself dejectedly onto a couch.

"I know," he muttered. "You think I'm the world's worst fool, and I suppose I am. I don't know how you managed it, but I'm sure that what happened will be no news to you. Well, if it's any consolation to you, I'm cured — cured of women forever," he proclaimed, with the extravagance of nineteen years. "But the jewels are gone — I don't know what became of them."

"The jewels, which were the property of my husband's family, are back in my possession," said Favilla severely. "There will be no public scandal about how you got them — though I have no doubt everybody in Rome knows by now what occurred at Clodia's house," she added cruelly. "But that doesn't mean that everything is forgiven and forgotten." How was it Cicero had phrased it? "Theft and murder aren't boyish pranks — they are dreadful crimes."

"Murder!" cried Sextus sharply. "What do you mean? You don't think I *killed* Aufidia, do you?" To his shame and horror, he burst into tears.

Favilla let him weep in silence. When he had stifled his sobs at last, she said gently, "Tell me what happened, Sextus."

"I dropped in to see her, as usual," he answered in a muffled voice, his gaze averted. "And there she was just as you must have found her. The cabinet was open, and the key was on the floor by her hand. She must have tried to reach for the jewels without leaving the bed, and with all her fat

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the exertion was too much for her heart.

"For a second I was too shocked to think. Then, of course, I knew I ought to call you at once. But the drawers of the cabinet were open — and I saw the gold and the gems — and I had no money to give Clodia the kind of presents other people gave her — oh, what's the use, Favilla? You know what I did."

Favilla's voice softened in spite of herself; it was such a relief to know that her worst suspicions had not been true. But she had had a week to prepare for her brother's eventual return, and she must not weaken now.

"Sextus," she said, "you know as well as I do the kind of people from whom we are descended. Can you imagine our father, or any of our family, stooping to steal a dead woman's jewels, no matter what the provocation? It's no wonder the Republic is in danger, when the sons of its oldest and proudest families can so lower their standards — or the daughters, either, for that matter. Think of Appius Claudius Caecus, for instance, and then think of his descendant Clodia!"

"Don't, Favilla!" Sextus was abjectly humble now. "I never want to think of her again! Just tell me what I can do to atone for the wrong I did. Do you want me to go away — to Spain, to Asia, anywhere you say? I'm so ashamed that I'd be only too willing to die, if that would do any good."

"Stop being a child!" his sister snapped. "It's about time you grew up, Sextus. No, I don't want you to die — I want you to live, to live to be of some use to your family and your country."

"I promise, sister," the boy said earnestly. "Indeed I do. I'm sick of that whole lot. And I'll never look at another woman as long as I live."

"Oh, what utter nonsense! Of course you will, and I wouldn't think much of you if you didn't. Just so it isn't another like Clodia, that's all I ask. I hope to live to see you married to the right sort of girl and the father of a fine family."

Sextus shook his head obstinately. Favilla could not repress a smile. But she had one more task to perform.

"I want to show you something, Sextus," she said in a low voice. "I have used every connection I had to prevent an open scandal — both for Gnaeus's sake, to keep his name from being smirched through me and mine, and for yours, to save you from the disgrace of a public trial. But don't think people haven't suspected that there was something peculiar going on here, what with Aufidia's sudden death, and your carryings-on, and now that affair at Clodia's, with half of Rome as witness. Well, Sextus, yesterday one of the slaves called me and showed me an inscription that somebody had scrawled on the wall of our house. I had it removed at once, but I copied it first so that you could see with your own eyes the kind of thing to which you have exposed your sister."

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She went to a chest and drew out a wax tablet. She held it out for Sextus to read what was written on it.

Clodia, they say, was noted for
Devotion to her brother:
Her case, it seems, has set the style,
For here we find another.

While Manlius hides away in Spain,
His lady looks on blandly
And showers her brother with the means
To play the rich fool grandly.

And when the husband's money's low,
You still can trust the ladies —
The heirs can ship an aged aunt
Quite suddenly to Hades!

Sextus shook with anger.

"Oh, vile!" he breathed. "Vile and false! We both know you never gave me a penny. And Aufidia had no money — she was a burden to you, not a prospective benefactress. And then to hint that *you* had anything to do with her death — !"

Favilla took the tablet from him.

"It's not worth getting too upset about," she said calmly. "From the allusion to Gnaeus, I take it that one of our political enemies is just being nasty."

"Give it to me, Favilla," exclaimed Sextus, reaching for the tablet. "I'm going to find out who wrote this outrageous thing and when I do, I'm going to thrash him roundly."

"You're going to do no such thing. I copied this for you to see, and now I'm going to destroy it. We've had enough gossip around here, and right now life is disturbed enough as it is. I only hoped that if you realized what you had let me in for, you would strengthen your resolve to make up for it by being a different person."

"Oh, I will, Favilla — believe me, I will! This clinches it — I'll never forget that disgusting libel. You, who've been more like my mother than my sister! Listen, Favilla, come with me to the atrium, and I'll swear on the images of our ancestors that to the day I die I'll never again do anything to make you ashamed of me!"

"Idiot!" laughed Favilla, tears in her eyes. "They're Gnaeus's ancestral images there, not ours. Ours, as you very well know, are in safekeeping till you have a wife and home of your own. And I don't want you to swear; I have faith in your bare word. Wait a minute till I wipe off this tablet, and then I'll have them bring in some wine to drink to your new life — and in memory of poor Aufidia, good old soul!"

Her heart was light as she seized the stylus and scraped the tablet clean. The slanderous verses had accomplished their purpose.

Yet she could not help a faint auctorial pang. Those verses had never been written on the wall of Gnaeus Manlius's or any other house. It had taken her many laborious hours, while she planned that interview with her brother, to compose them herself.

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DEAD MAN

by JAMES M. CAIN

HE FELT THE TRAIN CHECK, KNEW what it meant. In a moment, from up toward the engine, came the chant of the railroad detective: "Rise and shine, boys, rise and shine." The hoboes began dropping off. He could hear them out there in the dark, cursing as the train went by. That was what they always did on these freights: let the hoboes climb on in the yards, making no effort to dislodge them there; for that would have meant a foolish game of hide-and-seek between two or three detectives and two or three hundred hoboes, with the hoboes swarming on as fast as the detectives put them off. What they did was let the hoboes alone until the train was several miles under way; then they pulled down to a speed slow enough for men to drop off, but too fast for them to climb back on. Then the detective went down the line, brushing them off, like caterpillars from a twig. In two minutes they would all be ditched, a crowd of bitter men in a lonely spot; but they always cursed, always seemed surprised.

He crouched in the coal gondola and waited. He hadn't boarded a flat or a refrigerator with the others, back in the Los Angeles yards, tempting though this comfort was. He wasn't long on the road, and he still didn't like to mix with the other hoboes, admit he was one of them. Also, he couldn't shake off a notion that he was sharper than they were, that playing a lone hand he might think of some magnificent trick that would defeat the detective, and thus, even at this ignoble trade, give him a sense of accomplishment, of being good at it. He had slipped into the gond not in spite of its harshness, but because of it; it was black, and would give him a chance to hide, and the detective, not expecting him there, might pass him by. He was nineteen years old, and was proud of the nickname they had given him in the pool room back home. They called him Lucky.

"Rise and shine, boys, rise and shine."

Three dropped off the tank car ahead, and the detective climbed into the gond. The flashlight shot around, and Lucky held his breath. He had curled into one of the three chutes for unloading coal. The trick worked. These chutes were dangerous, for if you stepped into one and the bottom dropped, it would dump you under the train. The detective took no chances. He first shot the flash, then held on to the side while he climbed over the chutes. When he came to the last one, where Lucky lay, he shot the flash, but carelessly, and not squarely into the hole, so that he saw nothing. Stepping over, he

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went on, climbed to the box car behind, and resumed his chant; there were more curses, more feet sliding on ballast on the roadbed outside. Soon the train picked up speed. That meant the detective had reached the caboose, that all the hoboes were cleared.

Lucky stood up, looked around. There was nothing to see, except hot-dog stands along the highway, but it was pleasant to poke your head up, let the wind whip your hair, and reflect how you had outwitted the detective. When the click of the rails slowed and station lights showed ahead, he squatted down again, dropped his feet into the chute. As soon as lights flashed alongside, he braced against the opposite side of the chute: that was one thing he had learned, the crazy way they shot the brakes on these freights. When the train jerked to a shrieking stop, he was ready, and didn't get slammed. The bell tolled, the engine pulled away, there was an interval of silence. That meant they had cut the train, and would be picking up more cars. Soon they would be going on.

"Ah-ha! Hiding out on me, hey?"

The flashlight shot down from the box car. Lucky jumped, seized the side of the gond, scrambled up, vaulted. When he hit the roadbed, his ankles stung from the impact, and he staggered for footing. The detective was on him, grappling. He broke away, ran down the track, past the caboose, into the dark. The detective followed, but he was a big man and began to lose ground. Lucky was clear, when all of a sudden his foot drove against a switch bar and he went flat on his face, panting from the hysteria of shock.

The detective didn't grapple this time. He let go with a barrage of kicks.

"Hide out on me, will you? Treat you right, give you a break, and you hide out on me. I'll learn you —"

Lucky tried to get up, couldn't. He was jerked to his feet, rushed up the track on the run. He pulled back, but couldn't get set. He sat down, dug in with his sliding heels. The detective kicked and jerked, in fury. Lucky clawed for something to hold on to, his hand caught the rail. The detective stamped on it. He pulled it back in pain, clawed again. This time his fingers closed on a spike, sticking an inch or two out of the tie. The detective jerked, the spike pulled out of the hole, and Lucky resumed his unwilling run.

"Lemme go! Why don't you lemme go?"

"Come on! Hide out on me, will you? I'll learn you to hide out on Larry Nott!"

"Lemmo go! Lemme —"

Lucky pulled back, braced with his heels, got himself stopped. Then his whole body coiled like a spring and let go in one convulsive, passionate lunge. The spike, still in his hand, came down on the detective's head, and he felt it crush. He stood there, looking down at something dark and formless, lying across the rails . . .

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Hurrying down the track, he became aware of the spike, gave it a toss, heard it splash in the ditch. Soon he realized that his steps on the ties were being telegraphed by the listening rail, and he plunged across the ditch to the highway. There he resumed his rapid walk, trying not to run. But every time a car overtook him his heels lifted queerly, and his breath first stopped, then came in gasps as he listened for the car to stop. He came to a crossroads, turned quickly to his right. He let himself run here, for the road wasn't lighted as the main highway was, and there weren't many cars. The running tired him, but it eased the sick feeling in his stomach. He came to a sign that told him Los Angeles was 17 miles, and to his left. He turned, walked, ran, stooped down sometimes, panting, to rest. After a while it came to him why he had to get to Los Angeles, and so soon. The soup kitchen opened at seven o'clock. He had to be there, in that same soup kitchen where he had had supper, so it would look as though he had never been away.

When the lights went off, and it came broad daylight with the suddenness of Southern California, he was in the city, and a clock told him it was ten minutes after five. He thought he had time. He pressed on, exhausted, but never relaxing his rapid, half-shuffling walk.

It was ten minutes to seven when he got to the soup kitchen, and he quickly walked past it. He wanted to be clear at the end of the line, so he could have a word with Shorty, the man who dished out the soup, without impatient shoves from behind, and growls to keep moving.

Shorty remembered him. "Still here, hey?"

"Still here."

"Three in a row for you. Holy smoke, they ought be collecting for you by the month."

"Thought you'd be off."

"Who, me?"

"Sunday, ain't it?"

"Sunday? Wake up. This is Saturday."

"Saturday? You're kidding."

"Kidding my eye, this is Saturday, and a big day in this town, too."

"One day looks like another to me."

"Not this one. Parade."

"Yeah?"

"Shriners. You get that free."

"Well, that's my name, Lucky."

"My name's Shorty, but I'm over six feet."

"Nothing like that with me. I really got luck."

"You sure?"

"Like, for instance, getting a hunk of meat."

"I didn't give you no meat."

"Ain't you going to?"

"Shove your plate over quick. Don't let nobody see you."

"Thanks."

"Okay, Lucky. Don't miss the parade."

"I won't."

He sat at the rough table with the others, dipped his bread in the soup,

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tried to eat, but his throat kept contracting from excitement and he made slow work of it. He had what he wanted from Shorty. He had fixed the day, and not only the day but the date, for it would be the same date as the big Shriners' parade. He had fixed his name, with a little gag. Shorty wouldn't forget him. His throat relaxed, and he wolfed the piece of meat.

Near the soup kitchen he saw signs: *Lincoln Park Pharmacy*, *Lincoln Park Cafeteria.*

"Which way is the park, Buddy?" If it was a big park, he might find a thicket where he could lie down, rest his aching legs.

"Straight down, you'll see it."

There was a fence around it, but he found a gate, opened it, slipped in. Ahead of him was a thicket, but the ground was wet from a stream that ran through it. He crossed a small bridge, followed a path. He came to a stable, peeped in. It was empty, but the floor was thickly covered with new hay. He went in, made for a dark corner, burrowed under the hay, closed his eyes. For a few moments everything slipped away, except warmth, relaxation, ease. But then something began to drill into the back of his mind: Where did he spend last night? Where would he tell them he spent last night? He tried to think, but nothing would come to him. He would have said that he spent it where he spent the night before, but he hadn't spent it in Los Angeles. He had spent it in Santa Barbara, and come down in the morning on a truck. He had never spent a night in Los Angeles. He didn't know the places. He had no answers to the questions that were now pounding at him like sledge-hammers:

"What's that? Where you say you was?"

"In a flophouse."

"Which flophouse?"

"I didn't pay no attention which flophouse. It was just a flophouse."

"Where was this flophouse at?"

"I don't know where it was at. I never been to Los Angeles before. I don't know the names of no streets."

"What this flophouse look like?"

"Looked like a flophouse."

"Come on, don't give us no gags. What this flophouse look like? Ain't you got eyes, can't you say what this here place looked like? What's the matter, can't you talk?"

Something gripped his arm, and he felt himself being lifted. Something of terrible strength had hold of him, and he was going straight up in the air. He squirmed to get loose, then was plopped on his feet and released. He turned, terrified.

An elephant was standing there, exploring his clothes with its trunk. He knew then that he had been asleep. But when he backed away, he bumped into another elephant. He slipped between the two elephants, slithered past a third to the door, which was open about a foot. Out in the sunlight, he made his way back across the little bridge, saw what he hadn't noticed before: pens with

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deer in them, and ostriches, and mountain sheep, that told him he had stumbled into a zoo. It was after four o'clock, so he must have slept a long time in the hay. Back on the street, he felt a sobbing laugh rise in his throat. *That* was where he had spent the night. "In the elephant house at Lincoln Park."

"*What?*"

"That's right. In the elephant house."

"What you giving us? A stall?"

"It ain't no stall. I was in the elephant house."

"With them elephants?"

"That's right."

"How you get in there?"

"Just went in. The door was open."

"Just went in there, seen the elephants, and bedded down with them?" them?"

"I thought they was horses."

"You thought them elephants was horses?"

"It was dark. I dug in under the hay. I never knowed they was elephants till morning."

"How come you went in this place?"

"I left the soup kitchen, and in a couple of minutes I came to the park. I went in there, looking for some grass to lie down on. Then I come to this here place, looked to me like a stable, I peeped in, seen the hay, and hit it."

"And you wasn't scared of them elephants?"

"It was dark, I tell you, and I could hear them eating the hay, but I thought they was horses. I was tired, and I wanted some place to sleep."

"Then what?"

"Then when it got light, and I seen they was elephants, I run out of there, and beat it."

"Couldn't you tell them elephants by the smell?"

"I never noticed no smell."

"How many elephants was there?"

"Three."

He brushed wisps of hay off his denims. They had been fairly new, but now they were black with the grime of the coal gond. Suddenly his heart stopped, a suffocating feeling swept over him. The questions started again, hammered at him, beat into his brain.

"Where that coal dust come from?"

"I don't know. The freights, I guess."

"Don't you know it ain't no coal ever shipped into this part of the state? Don't you know that here all they burn is gas? Don't you know it ain't only been but one coal car shipped in here in six months, and that come in by a misread train order? Don't you know that car was part of that train this here detective was riding that got killed? *Don't you know that?* Come on, out with it, *WHERE THAT COAL DUST COME FROM?*"

Getting rid of the denims instantly became an obsession. He felt that people were looking at him on the street, spying the coal dust, waiting till he got by, then running into drug stores to phone the police that he

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had just passed by. It was like those dreams he sometimes had, where he was walking through crowds naked, except that this was no dream, and he wasn't naked, he was wearing these denims, these tell-tale denims with coal dust all over them. He clenched his hands, had a moment of terrible concentration, headed into a filling station.

"Hello."

"Hello."

"What's the chances on a job?"

"No chances."

"Why not?"

"Don't need anybody."

"That's not the only reason."

"There's about forty-two other reasons, one of them is I can't even make a living myself, but it's all the reason that concerns you. Here's a dime, kid. Better luck somewhere else."

"I don't want your dime. I want a job. If the clothes were better, that might help, mightn't it?"

"If the clothes were good enough for Clark Gable in the swell gambling-house scene, that wouldn't help a bit. Not a bit. I just don't need anybody, that's all."

"Suppose I got better clothes. Would you talk to me?"

"Talk to you any time, but I don't need anybody."

"I'll be back when I get the clothes."

"Just taking a walk for nothing."

"What's your name?"

"Hook's my name. Oscar Hook."

"Thanks, Mr. Hook. But I'm coming back. I just got a idea I can talk myself into a job. I'm some talker."

"You're all of that, kid. But don't waste your time. I don't need anybody."

"Okay. Just the same, I'll be back."

He headed for the center of town, asked the way to the cheap clothing stores. At Los Angeles and Temple, after an hour's trudge, he came to a succession of small stores in a Mexican quarter that were what he wanted. He went into one. The storekeeper was a Mexican, and two or three other Mexicans were standing around, smoking.

"Mister, will you trust me for a pair of white pants and a shirt?"

"No trust. Hey, scram."

"Look. I can have a job Monday morning if I can show up in that outfit. White pants and a white shirt. That's all."

"No trust. What you think this is, anyway?"

"Well, I got to get that outfit somewhere. If I get that, they'll let me go to work Monday, I'll pay you soon as I get paid off Saturday night."

"No trust. Sell for cash."

He stood there. The Mexicans stood there, smoked, looked out at the street. Presently one of them looked at him. "What kind of job, hey? What you mean, got to have white pants a white shirt a hold a job?"

"Filling station. They got a rule you got to have white clothes before you can work there."

"Oh. Sure. Filling station."

After a while the storekeeper

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spoke. "Ha! Is a joke. Job in filling station, must have a white pants, white shirt. Ha! Is a joke."

"What else would I want them for? Holy smoke, these are better for the road, ain't they? Say, a guy don't want white pants to ride freights, does he?"

"What filling station? Tell me that?"

"Guy name of Hook, Oscar Hook, got a Acme station, Main near Twentieth. You don't believe me, call him up."

"You go to work there, hey?"

"I'm *supposed* to go to work. I *told* him I'd get the white pants and white shirt, somehow. Well — if I don't get them I don't go to work."

"Why you come to me, hey?"

"Where else would I go? If it's not you, it's another guy down the street. No place else I can dig up the stuff over Sunday, is there?"

He stood around. They all stood around. Then once again the storekeeper looked up. "What size you wear, hey?"

He had a wash at a tap in the back yard, then changed there, between piled-up boxes and crates. The storekeeper gave him a white shirt, white pants, necktie, a suit of thick underwear, and a pair of shoes to replace his badly-worn brogans. "Is pretty cold, night-time, now. A thick underwear feel better."

"Okay. Much obliged."

"Can roll this other stuff up."

"I don't want it. Can you throw it away for me?"

"Is pretty dirty."

"Plenty dirty."

"You no want?"

"No."

His heart leaped as the storekeeper dropped the whole pile into a rubbish brazier and touched a match to some papers at the bottom of it. In a few minutes, the denims and everything else he had worn were ashes.

He followed the storekeeper inside. "Okay, here is a bill, I put all a stuff on a bill, no charge you more than anbody else. Is six dollar ninety-eight cents, then is a service charge one dollar."

All of them laughed. He took the "service charge" to be a gyp overcharge to cover the trust. He nodded. "Okay on the service charge."

The storekeeper hesitated. "Well, six ninety-eight. We no make a service charge."

"Thanks."

"See you keep a white pants clean till Monday morning."

"I'll do that. See you Saturday night."

"*Adios.*"

Out in the street, he stuck his hand in his pocket, felt something, pulled it out. It was a $1 bill. Then he understood about the "service charge," and why the Mexicans had laughed. He went back, kissed the $1 bill, waved a cheery salute into the store. They all waved back.

He rode a street car down to Mr. Hook's, got turned down for the job, rode a street car back. In his mind, he tried to check over everything. He

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had an alibi, fantastic and plausible. So far as he could recall, nobody on the train had seen him, not even the other hoboes, for he had stood apart from them in the yards, and had done nothing to attract the attention of any of them. The denims were burned, and he had a story to account for the whites. It even looked pretty good, this thing with Mr. Hook, for anybody who had committed a murder would be most unlikely to make a serious effort to land a job.

But the questions lurked there, ready to spring at him, check and recheck as he would. He saw a sign: *5-Course Dinner, 35 Cents.* He still had ninety cents, and went in, ordered steak and fried potatoes, the hungry man's dream of heaven. He ate, put a ten-cent tip under the plate. He ordered cigarettes, lit one, inhaled. He got up to go. A newspaper was lying on the table. The headline read:

L. R. NOTT, R. R. MAN, KILLED

On the street, he bought a paper, tried to open it under a street light, couldn't, tucked it under his arm. He found Highway 101, caught a hay truck bound for San Francisco. Going out Sunset Boulevard, it unexpectedly pulled over to the curb and stopped. He looked warily around. Down a sidestreet, about a block away, were the two red lights of a police station. He was tightening to jump and run, but the driver wasn't looking at the lights. "I told them bums that air hose was leaking. They set you nuts. Supposed to keep the stuff in shape and all they ever do is sit around and play blackjack."

The driver fished a roll of black tape from his pocket and got out. Lucky sat where he was a few minutes, then climbed down, walked to the glare of the headlights, opened his paper. There it was:

L. R. NOTT, R. R. MAN, KILLED

The decapitated body of L. R. Nott, 1327 De Soto Street, a detective assigned to a northbound freight, was found early this morning on the track near San Fernando station. It is believed he lost his balance while the train was shunting cars at the San Fernando siding and fell beneath the wheels. Funeral services will be held tomorrow.

Mr. Nott is survived by a widow, formerly Miss Elsie Snowden of Mannerheim, and a son, L. R. Nott, Jr., 5.

He stared at it, refolded the paper, tucked it under his arm, walked back to where the driver was taping the air hose. He was clear, and he knew it. "Boy, do they call you Lucky? Is your name Lucky? I'll say it is."

He leaned against the trailer, let his eye wander down the street. He saw the two red lights of the police station — glowing. He looked away quickly. A queer feeling began to stir inside him. He wished the driver would hurry up.

Presently he went back to the headlights again, found the notice, re-read it. He recognized that feeling now; it was the old Sunday-night feeling that he used to have back home, when the bells would ring and he would have to stop playing hide in the twilight, go to church, and

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hear about the necessity for being saved. It shot through his mind, the time he had played hookey from church, and hid in the livery stable; and how lonely he had felt, because there was nobody to play hide with; and how he had sneaked into church, and stood in the rear to listen to the necessity for being saved.

His eyes twitched back to the red lights, and slowly, shakily, but unswervingly he found himself walking toward them.

"I want to give myself up."

"Yeah, I know, you're wanted for grand larceny in Hackensack, N. J."

"No, I —"

"We quit giving them rides when the New Deal come in. Beat it."

"I killed a man."

"You — ? . . . When was it you done this?"

"Last night."

"Where?"

"Near here. San Fernando. It was like this —"

"Hey, wait till I get a card. . . . Okay, what's your name?"

"Ben Fuller."

"No middle name?"

"They call me Lucky."

"Lucky like in good luck?"

"Yes, sir. . . . Lucky like in good luck."

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The author of "Torrid Zone" was graduated from Kansas Teachers College in 1938. He became a high-school teacher and managed to eke out a living at it only by doing paid graduate work at the University of Kansas during summers. Then came the war, and Fletcher Flora went overseas with the 32nd Division. He collected a couple of pieces of shrapnel in some rough going on Luzon, and since the war he has been an instructor and supervisor of instructors in the Education Department of the United States Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth. Prior to collecting the shrapnel, he had collected a wife and son, and subsequently, another son and a daughter.

The urge to write is an old, old urge in Mr. Flora. Actually, he has been writing seriously less than two years, and then only on a part-time schedule. He made half a dozen sales in his first year of part-time writing, which is good going indeed. Mr. Flora hopes some day to devote all his time to writing, and if his debut in EQMM is any basis for prediction, we think Mr. Flora will realize his ambition. "Torrid Zone" is a very clever story — it won a Special Award in EQMM's Seventh Annual Contest and earned it handsomely.

TORRID ZONE

by FLETCHER FLORA

I'D BEEN WAITING AT THE TAVERN for this little guy for quite a while when he finally came in and crawled onto the stool next to me. It was hot. Stifling hot. From the corner of my eye, I could see that this guy was on the verge of prostration. His face was flushed and damp. He looked all in. Sighing wearily, he ran a finger around the inside of his wilted collar and leaned forward on his elbows on the bar.

It almost made me sorry for him, just to see him there. He looked so out of place. So unused to everything. He didn't even seem used to his clothes. He was wearing a rough shirt with a sweat-soaked collar too big for his neck that had been drawn to a puckered tightness, in spite of the heat, by a black string necktie. His dark suit, of coarse material, had been cut and stitched by a tailor who had put no more into the job than the material warranted. His shoes were new and cheap and good for bunions.

Nick, the barkeep, drifted down behind the bar.

"What's yours, brother? We got beer."

The rusty little guy lifted his eyes and managed a steamy smile.

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"Beer's fine. A bottle right off the coils. Real cold."

The old barkeep grinned. With a couple of brown fangs showing and his eyes all wrinkled up in his ugly old pan, he looked like he was getting all set to appreciate a joke that was away over the little guy's head.

"We got warm beer."

"No cold beer?"

"Warm beer, brother. That's all."

The little guy's eyes wavered and fell. His face puckered up as if he were going to cry, and a finger came up to run once more around the inside of the wilted collar.

"Warm beer," he said.

The barkeep uncapped the bottle and thumped it onto the bar, getting a big kick out of the newcomer's disappointment. The warm beer foamed up out of the neck, and the little guy covered it with his lips in a hurry, as if he didn't want to lose a drop even if it wasn't cold. After a few seconds, he lifted the bottle and ran three big swallows of the beer down under the head into his mouth. Setting the bottle back on the bar, he sighed again.

"Hot," he said.

In the mirror behind the bar, I could see that he was talking to me.

"It's always hot here," I said.

"And no ice. No refrigeration."

"No."

"It wouldn't seem so bad, if only there was a little ice. The heat wouldn't, I mean."

"I know what you mean. I used to feel the same way."

"Used to?"

"I've been here quite a while. You get used to things."

The little guy looked sadly at his warm beer. Maybe he was thinking of the beaded bottles of Budweiser he used to get for twenty cents back in God's country. You can buy lots of good things for twenty cents. The only trouble is, you don't realize it until it's too late.

"I guess so," he said.

He finished the beer and signaled the barkeep to set up another. One for me, too. After he'd stopped the head and taken a couple of swallows, he drew the back of a hand across his mouth and looked at me again.

"My name's Dugan," he confided. "James Dugan."

He waited for me to respond with my own name. When I didn't, he got a little redder in the face and went back to the bottle. Pretty soon he tried again.

"Not that it matters. Not any more. Maybe you're wondering how I ended up in this God-forsaken place."

"No," I said. "I'm not wondering."

He looked so miserable then that I felt something give. He obviously wanted to talk about his troubles and, after all, he didn't know what it was about.

"Look," I said. "Around here a guy just doesn't get curious about another guy's past. But if you want to talk, I can stay for a couple more beers."

He looked at himself in the mirror with his sad eyes and thought about it. Probably he was seeing a lot more

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than himself in the dirty glass. Probably he was seeing a second run of the whole dismal little show he wanted to tell me about. Finally he ordered a third beer, went through the routine with the head, and began talking.

"It was because of a woman," he said. "Her name was Hope. That seems like a kind of joke, doesn't it? A rotten kind of joke. She was my wife."

The old beginning of the old story. Already I was getting bored. I swallowed the awful stuff and wondered drearily how many men had wound up in this roasting bar, drinking warm beer, because their stories had begun the way this little guy was beginning his.

"Have you ever watched a woman go sour?" he asked. "It isn't a pleasant way to spend your time, especially if the woman started out so beautiful it made you hurt to look at her and almost bawl to touch her. That's the way it was with Hope. The ugly, slow souring of a woman.

"I guess the only reason she ever married me was because she was sick to death of the rocky farm where her old man scratched out a lousy living. She'd have done anything to get away from it. It must have been pretty tough on her to discover, after we were married, that she'd only swapped a rock pile for a crummy apartment on the wrong side of town. And it didn't make the bargain any sweeter when she found out that her husband didn't have any more talent for turning a fast buck than her old man.

"Lots of women with fewer assets than Hope's would have found ways of picking up a few luxuries. Not Hope. She had a fortune on her bones and never spent a cent of it. She was just too lazy to bother."

The little guy named Dugan sat for a minute staring bitterly at the bottle of beer in front of him. As for me, I found that I wasn't quite as bored as I'd started out to be. At least the guy had a new twist.

"Everything might have gone along all right anyhow," he went on, "if her tongue had been as soft as her body. It wasn't. The longer she lay around the apartment fermenting, the sharper it got.

"Things were still bearable, though. Because she was so beautiful, you see. I could still look at her. I could still watch her doing the things a married guy . . . You know what I mean. She was too lazy to even mind a guy's looking.

"What finally made it unbearable was that she began to get fat. She began to get fat, and she didn't give a damn. It made me furious to see the way she put on the pounds, never trying to stop it. She wasn't fit to be entrusted with the care of so much loveliness. When I tried to make her see what a monstrous thing she was doing, she gave me one of her nasty, wet smiles and went looking for more chocolate candy. After a while, she was just a fat, sour, lazy bitch."

Dugan drew a long shuddery breath, remembering, and drained his bottle of its warm beer.

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The old barkeep breathed on a glass, grinning at his private joke.

"No. Not just another woman, either. She was still the woman I thought about all the time. But now it was hate, not love, that kept her in my mind. I began to think about killing her. Revenge, you understand. Revenge for her deliberately letting the beautiful woman I loved die a lingering and horrible death. I thought about killing her for a long time, wondering how I could get away with it.

"It happened in a hurry when it happened. In a way that hadn't occurred to me in all my thinking. It was as if something was showing me the way. Something finally working on my side.

"It was a cold evening in March. Cold and wet. I came home from my two-bit bookkeeping job with no future to a home with no compensation, and emotionally I was walking along that dark border of danger that every man reaches now and then in his lifetime. The living room was empty. In the kitchen the breakfast dishes were piled dirty in the sink. The range was cold. No dinner cooking. A cold, wet March evening and no dinner cooking."

James Dugan paused, and beside me there was a small windy sound. I looked up from my beer and saw that his shoulders were shaking. He was laughing to himself. I waited, but he didn't go on.

"Get to it," I said. "How did you knock her off?"

"Excuse me," he said. "I was wondering if any detective ever considered a cold kitchen range as the basic cause of a murder."

"Detectives don't consider the basic cause of a lot of murders," I said. "What did you do, stick her head in the range?"

He watched moodily while the old barkeep, unasked, replaced his empty bottle with a full one.

"No. I went out of the kitchen, back through the living room, and into the bedroom. The bed was unmade since morning. On the rumpled covers, Hope's size-44 underthings were lying in a heap. I went over to the bathroom door and opened it.

"She was lying in the tub, submerged to her neck. She looked up at me, stirring a little, and her swollen body was a gross distortion under the wavering water. She was holding a magazine in her hands. On the flat rim of the tub were a package of butts and a box of the chocolate creams she was always buying for a dollar at the corner drug store. I tell you, I felt sick to my stomach. . . . It was steamy hot in the room. She liked it that way when she took a bath. Almost as hot as it is here. She'd plugged an electric heater into a socket over the lavatory, and it was standing on a stool beside the tub. I noticed that the cord was long enough to permit the heater to fall into the water.

" 'That's dangerous,' I said. 'Having the heater there. You could be electrocuted.'

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"She shrugged her fat shoulders under the water and turned a page of the magazine.

" 'Don't be a fool. How could a little heater do that? We're going out to dinner. Then to a movie. Gable's at the Bijou.'

"I stood there thinking how stupid she was. And looking at the heater and wondering why such a simple idea hadn't occurred to me before. An accident. Just the kind of accident a fat, sloppy woman might have. No one could ever prove it otherwise. A little push on the heater, and it would be in the water with Hope. An accident!"

James Dugan's thin shoulders vibrated with the same unfunny laughter. He seized his bottle and drank greedily. Then he set it down with a long ragged sigh.

"It was easy," he said quietly. "I took a step across the tile floor and pushed the heater into the water. And, just like that, Hope was a fat corpse.

"I stood looking down at her a few seconds, feeling a tingling in my fingertips where they had touched the hot reflector of the heater, trying to think what an innocent husband would do if he came home and found his wife dead in the bath tub. I finally decided he would get her out of the water first of all, so I unplugged the heater — just in case it hadn't shorted out — and lugged Hope's big, slippery body into the bedroom.

"Next I figured an innocent guy would call a doctor, so I did, and when the doctor saw how Hope had died, he called the cops. It worked just the way I expected.

"Up to a point, I mean.

"The cop who came was dressed in plain clothes, and he told me how sorry he was, but all the time he was looking around, looking around. He asked a lot of questions and finally told me to take it easy in the living room while he finished his investigation. He and the doctor went into the bathroom and stayed a long time. I could hear them moving around in there, and the murmur of their voices now and then. But I wasn't worried. I didn't see how anything could go wrong for me.

"At last they came out into the living room and the cop said, 'From the position of the stool the heater was on, I'd say the only way she could have knocked it over was in getting out of the tub. Maybe she slipped and made a grab or something?'

" 'I guess so,' I said.

" 'Sure. Funny thing, though. The magazine she was reading is still in the water. She'd have laid the magazine aside before trying to stand up in the tub. To lift that body she'd need both hands.'

"For a second I couldn't breathe. Then I found an explanation.

" 'It was on the rim,' I said. 'I must have knocked it in when I dragged her body out of the tub.'

"The cop let his eyes wander over me slowly — face, body, hands, even my feet. His voice sounded queer.

" 'Well, a detective is supposed to

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notice things like that. Little things most people don't see. Like your fingers, for instance. Dugan, how did you burn those fingertips?'

"Under a kind of strange and fatal compulsion, I lifted my right hand, palm up, and looked at the fingertips that had been trying to get a warning through the excitement to my brain ever since I'd pushed the heater into the water.

"Blisters. Five little white fresh blisters.

"Later, at Headquarters, they broke me down, of course. Those blisters couldn't be explained away . . ."

Dugan's voice died away as I stood up and put on my snappy little cap with the word GUIDE above the visor. He read the word and went pale, looking over at Nick as if for moral support. But the old barkeep just reached for his bar rag, grinning.

Slipping off his stool, the little guy stood indecisively there beside me, as if hating to leave. His finger came up a third time to run around the inside of his wilted collar.

"I know," he said wistfully. "I've known since the minute they strapped me in the electric chair and threw the switch. You're taking me back to Hope. Back to Hope forever."

He emptied the warm swill that was left in his bottle, his Adam's apple jiggling desperately, and then he tried to square his round little shoulders and look brave.

"Well, where do I check in?"

"Right here," grinned Old Nick.

"Q"

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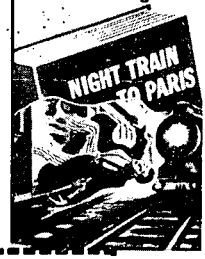
Night Train to Paris



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—Continued on inside cover

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